This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

The works of Alexander Pope

Alexander Pope, John Wilson Croker, Whitwell Elwin, William John Courthope

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE WORKS

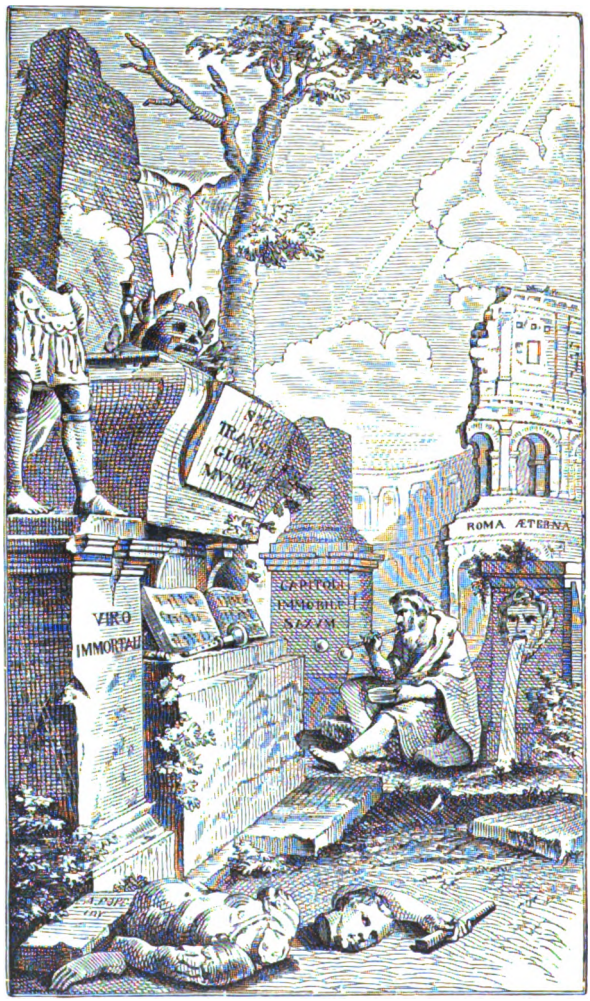
OF

ALEXANDER POPE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Frontispiece to the Essay on Man, designed by Pope to represent the vanity of human glory.

Digitized by Google

THE WORKS

OF

ALEXANDER POPE.

NEW EDITION.

INCLUDING

SEVERAL HUNDRED UNPUBLISHED LETTERS AND OTHER NEW MATERIALS.

COLLECTED IN PART BY THE LATE

RT. HON. JOHN WILSON CROKER.

WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES.

BY REV. WHITWELL ELWIN.

VOL. II.

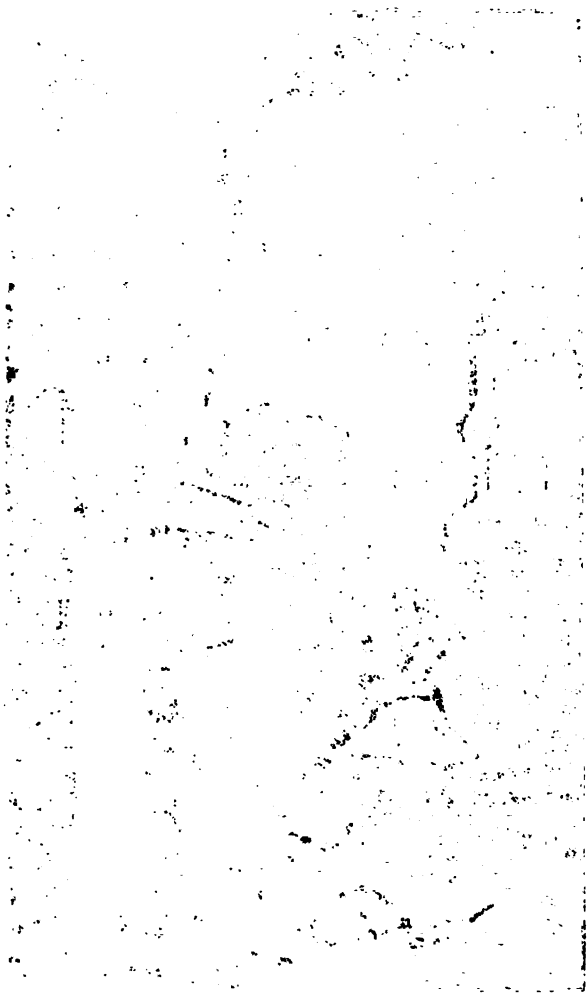
POETRY.—VOL. II.

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1871.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

THE WORKS

OF

ALEXANDER POPE.

NEW EDITION.

INCLUDING

SEVERAL HUNDRED UNPUBLISHED LETTERS, AND OTHER NEW MATERIALS.

COLLECTED IN PART BY THE LATE

RT. HON. JOHN WILSON CROKER.

WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES.

BY REV. WHITWELL ELWIN.

VOL. II.

POETRY.—VOL. II.

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1871.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

Digitized by Google

X8
4
8957

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

Digitized by Google

941 p
1871
v.2

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME OF POETRY.

	PAGE
Essay on Criticism	3
Warburton's Commentary and Notes	85
Rape of the Lock	113
First Edition of the Rape of the Lock	183
Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady	195
Eloisa to Abelard	217
Essay on Man	259
The Universal Prayer	457
Warburton's Commentary and Notes on the Essay on Man	465
Warburton's Notes on the Universal Prayer	525

00696

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

AN

ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1709.

Digitized by Google

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM,

4to.

——————— Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.—HORAT.

London: Printed for W. LEWIS, in Russel-Street, Covent Garden; and sold by W. TAYLOR, at the Ship, in Pater-Noster-Row, T. OSBORN, in Gray's-Inn, near the Walks, and J. GRAVES, in St. James's Street. 1711.

Warton says that the poem was "first advertised in the Spectator, No. 65, May 15th, 1711." Pope informed Caryll that a thousand copies were printed. Lewis, the publisher, was a Roman Catholic, and an old schoolfellow of the poet.

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

Written by MR. POPE.

The second edition, 8vo.

London: Printed for W. LEWIS, in Russel-Street. Covent Garden, 1713.

Though the date on the title page is 1713, Isaac Reed states that the second edition was advertised in the Spectator on November 22, 1712. It was a common practice to substitute the date of the coming, for that of the expiring, year. A third and fourth edition in a smaller type and size came out in 1713. In 1714, the poem was appended to the second edition of Lintot's Miscellanies, by some arrangement with Lewis, whose name appears upon the title page of that particular edition of the Miscellanies as joint publisher. On July 17, 1716, Lintot purchased the remainder of the copyright for £15, preparatory to inserting the piece in the quarto of 1717. He brought out a sixth octavo edition of the essay in 1719, and a seventh in 1722, and reprinted the poem in each of the four editions of his Miscellanies which were published between 1720 and 1732.

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

Written in the year 1709. With the Commentary and Notes of W. WARBURTON, A.M. 4to.

The Essay on Criticism has no date, but on the title page of the "Essay on Man," which appeared in the same volume is, "London: Printed by W. BOWYER for M. COOPER, at the Globe in Pater-Noster Row. 1743." Pope, writing to Warburton on October 7, 1743, says, "I have given Bowyer your comment on the Essay on Criticism this week, and he shall lose no time with the rest." On Jan. 12, 1744, he tells his commentator that the publication had been delayed by the advice of Bowyer, and on Feb. 21, he writes word that he shall keep it back till Warburton goes to town. There is no doubt that the edition was printed in 1743, and published in 1744.

Digitized by Google

In the year 1709 was written the Essay on Criticism, a work which displays such extent of comprehension, such nicety of distinction, such acquaintance with mankind, and such knowledge both of ancient and modern learning, as are not often attained by the maturest age and longest experience. It was published about two years afterwards, and being praised by Addison in the Spectator, with sufficient liberality, met with so much favour as enraged Dennis, "who," he says, "found himself attacked without any manner of provocation on his side, and attacked in his person, instead of his writings, by one who was wholly a stranger to him, at a time when all the world knew he was persecuted by fortune; and not only saw that this was attempted in a clandestine manner, with the utmost falsehood and calumny, but found that all this was done by a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth at the same time but truth, candour, friendship, goodnature, humanity, and magnanimity." How the attack was clandestine is not easily perceived, nor how his person is depreciated; but he seems to have known something of Pope's character, in whom may be discovered an appetite to talk too frequently of his own virtues. Thus began the hostility between Pope and Dennis, which, though it was suspended for a short time, never was appeased. Pope seems, at first, to have attacked him wantonly; but though he always professed to despise him, he discovers, by mentioning him very often, that he felt his force or his venom.

Of this Essay Pope declared that he did not expect the sale to be quick, because "not one gentleman in sixty, even of liberal education, could understand it." The gentlemen and the education of that time seem to have been of a lower character than they are of this. He mentioned a thousand copies as a numerous impression. Dennis was not his only censurer. The zealous papists thought the monks treated with too much contempt, and Erasmus too studiously praised; but to these objections he had not much regard. The Essay has been translated into French by Hamilton, author of the Comte de Grammont, whose version was never printed; by Robotham, secretary to the king for Hanover, and by Resnel; and commented by Dr. Warburton, who has discovered in it such order and connection as was not perceived by Addison, nor, as is said, intended by the author. Almost every poem consisting of precepts is so far arbitrary and immethodical, that many of the paragraphs may change places with

Digitized by Google

no apparent inconvenience; for of two or more positions, depending upon some remote and general principle, there is seldom any cogent reason why one should precede the other. But for the order in which they stand, whatever it be, a little ingenuity may easily give a reason. "It is possible," says Hooker, "that, by long circumduction from any one truth, all truth may be inferred." Of all homogeneous truths, at least of all truths respecting the same general end, in whatever series they may be produced, a concatenation by intermediate ideas may be formed such as, when it is once shown, shall appear natural; but if this order be reversed, another mode of connection equally specious may be found or made. Aristotle is praised for naming fortitude first of the cardinal virtues, as that without which no other virtue can steadily be practised; but he might with equal propriety have placed prudence and justice before it, since without prudence fortitude is mad, without justice it is mischievous. As the end of method is perspicuity, that series is sufficiently regular that avoids obscurity, and where there is no obscurity, it will not be difficult to discover method.

The Essay on Criticism is one of Pope's greatest works, and if he had written nothing else, would have placed him among the first critics and the first poets, as it exhibits every mode of excellence that can embellish or dignify didactic composition—selection of matter, novelty of arrangement, justness of precept, splendour of illustration, and propriety of digression. I know not whether it be pleasing to consider that he produced this piece at twenty, and never afterwards excelled it. He that delights himself with observing that such powers may be soon attained, cannot but grieve to think that life was ever after at a stand. To mention the particular beauties of the essay, would be unprofitably tedious; but I cannot forbear to observe that the comparison of a student's progress in the sciences with the journey of a traveller in the Alps, is perhaps the best that English poetry can show. A simile, to be perfect, must both illustrate and ennoble the subject; must show it to the understanding in a clearer view, and display it to the fancy with greater dignity; but either of these qualities may be sufficient to recommend it. In didactic poetry, of which the great purpose is instruction, a simile may be praised which illustrates though it does not ennoble; in heroics that may be admitted which ennobles, though it does not illustrate. That it may be complete, it is required to exhibit, independently of its references, a pleasing image; for a simile is said to be a short episode. To this antiquity was so attentive, that circumstances were sometimes added which, having no parallels, served only to fill the imagination, and produced what Perrault ludicrously called "comparisons with a long tail." In their similes the greatest writers have sometimes failed. The ship race compared

Digitized by Google

with the chariot race, is neither illustrated nor aggrandised; land and water make all the difference. When Apollo, running after Daphne, is likened to a greyhound chasing a hare, there is nothing gained; the ideas of pursuit and flight are too plain to be made plainer, and a god and the daughter of a god, are not represented much to their advantage by a hare and a dog. The simile of the Alps has no useless parts, yet affords a striking picture by itself; it makes the foregoing position better understood, and enables it to take faster hold on the attention; it assists the apprehension, and elevates the fancy.

Let me likewise dwell a little on the celebrated paragraph in which it is directed that the sound should seem an echo to the sense,—a precept which Pope is allowed to have observed beyond any other English poet. This notion of representative metre, and the desire of discovering frequent adaptations of the sound to the sense, have produced, in my opinion, many wild conceits and imaginary beauties. All that can furnish this representation are the sounds of the words considered singly, and the time in which they are pronounced. Every language has some words framed to exhibit the noises which they express, as *thump*, *rattle*, *growl*, *hiss*. These, however, are but few, and the poet cannot make them more, nor can they be of any use but when sound is to be mentioned. The time of pronunciation was in the dactylic measures of the learned languages capable of considerable variety; but that variety could be accommodated only to motion or duration, and different degrees of motion were perhaps expressed by verses rapid or slow, without much attention of the writer, when the image had full possession of his fancy; but our language having little flexibility, our verses can differ very little in their cadence. The fancied resemblances, I fear, arise sometimes merely from the ambiguity of words; there is supposed to be some relation between a *soft* line and a *soft* couch, or between *hard* syllables and *hard* fortune. Motion, however, may be in some sort exemplified, and yet it may be suspected that in such resemblances the mind often governs the idea, and the sounds are estimated by their meaning. One of their most successful attempts has been to describe the labour of Sisyphus:

> With many a weary step, and many a groan,
> Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone;
> The huge round stone, resulting with a bound,
> Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground.

Who does not perceive the stone to move slowly upward, and roll violently back? But set the same numbers to another sense:

> While many a merry tale, and many a song,
> Cheered the rough road, we wished the rough road long;

Digitized by Google

> The rough road then, returning in a round,
> Mocked our impatient steps, for all was fairy ground.

We have surely now lost much of the delay, and much of the rapidity. But to show how little the greatest master of numbers can fix the principles of representative harmony, it will be sufficient to remark that the poet who tells us that

> When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
> The line too labours, and the words move slow;
> Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
> Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main;

when he had enjoyed for about thirty years the praise of Camilla's lightness of foot, he tried another experiment upon *sound* and *time*, and produced this memorable triplet:

> Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full resounding line,
> The long majestic march, and energy divine.

Here are the swiftness of the rapid race, and the march of slow-paced majesty, exhibited by the same poet in the same sequence of syllables, except that the exact prosodist will find the line of swiftness by one time longer than that of tardiness. Beauties of this kind are commonly fancied, and when real are technical and nugatory, not to be rejected, and not to be solicited.—JOHNSON.

The Essay on Criticism is a poem of that species for which our author's genius was particularly turned,—the didactic and moral. It is therefore, as might be expected, a master-piece in its kind. I have been sometimes inclined to think that the praises Addison has bestowed on it were a little partial and invidious. "The observations," says he, "follow one another like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose writer." It is, however, certain that the poem before us is by no means destitute of a just integrity, and a lucid order.[1] Each of the precepts and remarks naturally introduce the succeeding ones, so as to form an entire whole. The Spectator adds, "The observations in this Essay are *some* of them *uncommon*." There is, I fear, a small mixture of ill-nature in these words; for this Essay, though on a beaten subject, abounds in many new remarks and original rules, as well as in many happy and beautiful illustrations and applications of the old ones. We are, indeed, amazed to find such a knowledge of the world, such a maturity of judgment, and such a penetration into human nature, as are here displayed, in

[1] This language, held by Warton in his Essay on the Genius of Pope, was subsequently reversed by him in his edition of Pope's Works. He then acknowledged that the notion of "a methodical regularity" in the Essay on Criticism was a "groundless opinion."

Digitized by Google

so very young a writer as was Pope when he produced this Essay, for he was not twenty years old. Correctness and a just taste are usually not attained but by long practice and experience in any art; but a clear head and strong sense were the characteristical qualities of our author, and every man soonest displays his radical excellences. If his predominant talent be warmth and vigour of imagination it will break out in fanciful and luxuriant descriptions, the colouring of which will perhaps be too rich and glowing. If his chief force lies in the understanding rather than in the imagination, it will soon appear by solid and manly observations on life or learning, expressed in a more chaste and subdued style. The former will frequently be hurried into obscurity or turgidity, and a false grandeur of diction; the latter will seldom hazard a figure whose usage is not already established, or an image beyond common life; will always be perspicuous if not elevated; will never disgust if not transport his readers; will avoid the grosser faults if not arrive at the greater beauties of composition. When we consider the just taste, the strong sense, the knowledge of men, books, and opinions that are so predominant in the Essay on Criticism, we must readily agree to place the author among the first critics, though not, as Dr. Johnson says, "among the first poets," on this account alone. As a poet he must rank much higher for his Eloïsa and Rape of the Lock. The Essay, it is said, was first written in prose, according to the precept of Vida, and the practice of Racine, who was accustomed to draw out in plain prose, not only the subject of each of the five acts, but of every scene, and every speech, that he might see the conduct and coherence of the whole at one view, and would then say, "My tragedy is finished."—WARTON.

Most of the observations in this Essay are just, and certainly evince good sense, an extent of reading, and powers of comparison, considering the age of the author, extraordinary. Johnson's praise however is exaggerated.—BOWLES.

"Essay" in Pope's day was used in its now obsolete sense of an attempt. Stephens in 1648 entitled his translation of the five first books of the Thebais "an Essay upon Statius:" and Denham's "Essay on the second book of Virgil's Æneis" is a version and not a dissertation. "I have undertaken," Dryden wrote to Walsh, "to translate all Virgil; and as an essay have already paraphrased the third Georgic as an example." Two quotations in Johnson's Dictionary,—one from Dryden, the other from Glanville,—show that the word was usually understood to imply diffidence. Dryden, in his Epistle to Roscommon, says,

> Yet modestly he does his work survey,
> And calls a finished poem an essay;

Digitized by Google

and Glanville says, "This treatise prides itself in no higher a title than that of an essay, or imperfect attempt at a subject." Locke named his great and elaborate work an "Essay on the Human Understanding," from the consciousness that it was an "imperfect attempt," and when hostile critics refused him the benefit of his modest title, he answered that they did his book an honour "in not suffering it to be an essay." Pope borrowed both the word, and the plan of his poem, from some works which enjoyed in his youth a credit far beyond their worth,—the Essay on Translated Verse by the Earl of Roscommon, and the Essay on Satire, and the Essay on Poetry by the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Duke of Buckingham. These small productions had been suggested in their turn by Horace's Art of Poetry, and its modern imitations. Roscommon and Mulgrave, men of common-place minds, were incapable of originality, and Pope, with the latent genius of a leader, was a follower in early years.

"The things that I have written fastest," said Pope to Spence, "have always pleased the most. I wrote the Essay on Criticism fast; for I had digested all the matter in prose before I began upon it in verse."[1] This last circumstance was mentioned by Warton in his Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, long before the Anecdotes of Spence were published, and Johnson commented upon the statement in his review of Warton's work. "There is nothing," he said, "improbable in the report, nothing indeed but what is more likely than the contrary; yet I cannot forbear to hint the danger and weakness of trusting too readily to information. Nothing but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive that so many groundless reports should be propagated as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think as what they know; some men of confused memories and habitual inaccuracy ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods, which are afterwards innocently diffused by successive relators."[2] The caution was not intended to discredit the evidence of Spence. Warton had suppressed his authority, and Johnson had a proper mistrust of common hearsay.

On the title-page of the poem in the quarto of 1717, it is said, that it was "written in the year 1709," to which Richardson has attached the note, "Mr. Pope told me himself that the Essay on Criticism was, indeed, written 1707, though said 1709 by mistake." The poet continued the alleged mistake through all succeeding revisions. The quarto of 1743 was the last edition he superintended, and 1709

[1] Singer's Spence, p. 107.
[2] Johnson's Works, ed. Murphy, vol. ii. p. 354.

Digitized by Google

appears as usual upon the title-page, but Warburton announced in the final sentence of the commentary, that the Essay was "the work of an author who had not attained the twentieth year of his age," and as the author was born in May, 1688, he must, according to this testimony, have completed his task before May, 1708, which confirms the account of Richardson. Pope had thus assigned one date to his piece on the first page of the quarto of 1743, and sanctioned the promulgation of a different date on the concluding page. There is the same contradiction in his conversations with Spence. "My Essay on Criticism," he said on one occasion, "was written in 1709, and published in 1711, which is as little time as ever I let anything of mine lay by me."[1] This agrees with the printed title-page. "I showed Walsh," he said to Spence on another occasion, "my Essay on Criticism in 1706. He died the year after."[2] This falls in with the evidence of Richardson and Warburton; for Walsh died on March 15, 1708, and 1706 was an error for 1707. The double date reappears in a note to the Pope Letters of 1735, solely through a change in the punctuation. "Mr. Walsh," it was said in some copies, "died at 49 years old, in the year 1708. The year after Mr. Pope writ the Essay on Criticism." "Mr. Walsh," it was said in other copies, "died at 49 years old in the year 1708, the year after Mr. Pope writ the Essay on Criticism." In the first version it is asserted that the poem was written in 1709, or the year after Mr. Walsh died; in the second version it is asserted that it was written in 1707, and that Mr. Walsh died the year after. Such a series of conflicting statements could not all be accidental. When Pope published the quarto edition of his Letters in 1737, he again altered the note. "Mr. Walsh," he then said, "died at 49 years old, in the year 1708, the year before the Essay on Criticism was printed," which informs us of the new fact that it was printed a couple of years before it was published, and since the poet assured Spence that it was written two or three years before it was printed,[3] we have the date of its composition once more thrown back to 1707. Pope forgot the confession in the poem, ver. 735—740, that in consequence of having "lost his guide" by the death of Walsh, he was afraid to attempt ambitious themes, and selected the Essay on Criticism as a topic suited to "low numbers." However fictitious may have been the reason he assigned for the choice of his subject, he there admits that he did not form the design till after the death of his friend in March 1708. In his later statements he oscillated between the truth, and the desire to magnify the precocity of his genius. He was always ambitious of the kind of praise which Johnson bestows upon the Essay, when he calls it "the stupendous performance of a youth not yet twenty." But at

[1] Spence, p. 128. [2] Spence, p. 147. [3] Spence, p. 205.

Digitized by Google

whatever period the poem was first written, it did not appear till May, 1711, and represents the capacity of Pope at twenty-three. He avowedly kept his pieces long in manuscript for the purpose of maturing and polishing them, and they were as good as he could make them at the period when they finally left his hands.

The Essay on Criticism was published anonymously. Warton was informed by Lewis the bookseller, that "it laid many days in his shop unnoticed and unread." Pope wrote word to Caryll, July 19, 1711, that he did not expect it would ever arrive at a second edition. Piqued, said Lewis, at the neglect, the poet one day directed copies to several great men, and among others to Lord Lansdowne, and the Duke of Buckingham. These presents caused the work to be talked about.[1] The name of the author, which soon transpired, assisted the sale, and the paper of Addison in the Spectator on December 20, 1711, brought the Essay under the notice of the entire reading world, though it was still another twelvemonth before the thousand copies were exhausted.

The notoriety, if not the sale, of the Essay on Criticism must have been promoted by the angry pamphlet put forth by Dennis six months before the laudatory paper of Addison appeared in the Spectator.[2] Dennis was the only living writer who was openly abused in the poem, and there was an asperity in the language which savoured of personal hostility. He and Pope were slightly acquainted. "At his first coming to town," says Dennis, "he was very importunate with the late Mr. Henry Cromwell to introduce him to me. The recommendation of Mr. Cromwell engaged me to be about thrice in company with him; after which I went into the country, and neither saw him, nor thought of him, till I found myself insolently attacked by him in his very superficial Essay on Criticism."[3] A passage quoted by Bowles from Pope's Prologue to the Satires reveals the cause of the enmity:

> Soft were my numbers; who could take offence
> While pure description held the place of sense?
> Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry theme,
> A painted mistress, or a purling stream.
> Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
> I never answered,—I was not in debt.[4]

Here we learn that Dennis thought meanly of Pope's Pastorals.

[1] Warton's Pope, vol. i. p. xviii.

[2] Dennis's Reflections, Critical and Satyrical, upon a late Rhapsody called An Essay upon Criticism, was advertised as "this day published" in *The Daily Courant* of June 20, 1711. Pope sent the pamphlet to Caryll on June 25, and in a letter to Cromwell of the same date, he says "Mr. Lintot favoured me with a sight of Mr. Dennis's piece of fine satire before it was published."

[3] Remarks upon Mr. Pope's Dunciad, p. 39.

[4] Ver. 147.

Digitized by Google

The critic had enough taste for true poetry to despise the conventional puerilities which, more than "pure description, held the place of sense" in these juvenile effusions. He frequented the coffee-houses where authors congregated, he indulged in professional talk, and his unfavourable judgment was sure to get round to Pope. The irritation at the time must have been great, since the censure continued to rankle in the mind of the poet at the distance of five-and-twenty years. His memory was less faithful when he claimed credit for not replying. He found it convenient to forget that he had seized an early opportunity for retaliating in the Essay on Criticism.

Dennis complained that "he was attacked in a clandestine manner in his person instead of his writings." "How the attack," says Johnson, "was clandestine is not easily perceived, nor how his person is depreciated." Evidently Dennis termed the attack clandestine, because the Essay was anonymous, and his assailant concealed. Pope, however, had not been studious of secrecy among his acquaintances, and Dennis showed in his pamphlet that he knew perfectly well with whom he had to deal. His assertion, denied by Johnson, that he was attacked "in his person instead of his writings" is clearly correct, unless, contrary to usage, the word is restricted to what is indelible in a man's bodily make. To say that he reddened at every word of objection, and stared tremendous with a threatening eye, like the fierce tyrants depicted in old tapestry, was to represent his personal bearing and appearance in an offensive light. Pope himself disclaimed the personality. "I cannot conceive," he wrote to Caryll, June 25, 1711, "what ground he has for so excessive a resentment, nor imagine how those three lines can be called a reflection on his person which only describe him subject to a little colour and stare on some occasions, which are revolutions that happen sometimes in the best and most regular faces in Christendom." The description, in other words, was not a reflection upon the person of Dennis, because some persons with handsome faces were liable to the same infirmity, and no satire was personal which did not declare a man to be radically ugly. That the resentment might seem the more unreasonable, the stare tremendous and threatening eye, were softened down to a "little stare." This was characteristic of Pope. He was not afraid to strike, but when the blow was resented, he frequently made a hasty and ignominious retreat. Either he pretended that the satire was not aimed at the individuals who called him to account, or he gave a mitigated and erroneous version of his lampoons.

Pope lashed Dennis for an intemperance of manner which could be controlled at will. Dennis upbraided Pope with a deformity which he had not caused and could not cure. "If you have a mind," said the infuriated critic, "to enquire between Sunninghill and Oakingham, for a young, squab, short gentleman, an eternal writer of

Digitized by Google

amorous pastoral madrigals, and the very bow of the god of Love, you will be soon directed to him. And pray, as soon as you have taken a survey of him, tell me whether he is a proper author to make personal reflections on others. This little author may extol the ancients as much, and as long as he pleases, but he has reason to thank the good gods that he was born a modern, for had he been born of Grecian parents, and his father by consequence had by law the absolute disposal of him, his life had been no longer than that of one of his poems,—the life of half a day."[1] There was a wide difference between ridiculing the distortions of countenance which grew out of irascible vanity, and mocking at defects which were a misfortune, and not a fault. But Pope's lines were insulting, and a man of the world would have foreseen that Dennis would repel insult by scurrility. The poet was as yet a novice in the coarse personalities of that abusive age, and he had not anticipated such brutal raillery. "The latter part of Mr. Dennis's book," he wrote to Caryll, "is no way to be properly answered, but by a wooden weapon, and I should perhaps have sent him a present from Windsor Forest of one of the best and toughest oaken plants between Sunninghill and Oakingham if he had not informed me in his preface that he is at this time persecuted by fortune. This, I protest, I knew not the least of before; if I had, his name had been spared in the Essay for that only reason."[2] Pope could no more compete with Dennis in personal prowess, than Dennis could compete in satire with Pope. His assigned reason for not executing his empty vaunt was equally hollow. He was not wont to spare his enemies out of consideration for their necessities, but taunted them with their forlorn condition, and, true to his custom, the persecution of fortune, which he said would have induced him to suppress his satire upon Dennis, was made the ingredient of a fresh satire at a future day:

I never answered; I was not in debt.

The insinuation was unjust. Violent, and often wrong-headed, Dennis spoke his genuine sentiments, and was not more a hireling than Pope, or any other author who earns money by his pen. The poor debtor could not have bartered his honour for a sorrier bribe. The pamphlet on the Essay on Criticism consisted of thirty-two octavo pages of small print, with a preface of five pages, and he received for it 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Dennis urged as an aggravation of the "falsehood and calumny" in the Essay, that they proceeded from a "little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth at the same time but truth, candour,

[1] Dennis's Reflections, p. 29.
[2] Pope to Caryll, June 25, 1711.

Digitized by Google

friendship, goodnature, humanity, and magnanimity." These are the qualities enforced in the poem, and whether the description of Dennis, under the name of Appius, was a faithful likeness or a caricature, the attack was at variance with the precepts which accompanied it. Pope insisted that the specification of faults, to be useful, must be delicate and courteous. He laid down the proposition at ver. 573, that "blunt truths do more mischief than nice falsehoods," and at ver. 576, that "without good breeding truth is disapproved." At the interval of six lines he exemplified the urbanity he enjoined by a derisive sketch which could only be intended to injure and exasperate. The inconsistency did not stop here. He prefaced the obnoxious passage by the maxim, "those best can bear reproof who merit praise," and the sketch of Dennis is an illustration of the opposite character. Was Pope a man who bore reproof with the fortitude which entitled him to scoff at others for their irritability? He certainly sometimes drew a flattering picture of his own equanimity and forbearance. He assures us at ver. 741, that he was "careless of censure." He told Spence, that "he never much minded what his angry critics published against him,—only one or two things at first." "When," he added, "I heard for the first time that Dennis had written against me, it gave me some pain; but it was quite over as soon as I came to look into his book, and found he was in such a passion."[1] In the Prologue to the Satires, he represents himself to have been a perfect model of candour and amiability, and says of the objections of his correctors,

> If wrong I smiled; if right I kissed the rod.[2]

But he could seldom keep long to one version of any subject, and the truth comes out in his first Imitation of Horace:

> Peace is my dear delight,—not Fleury's more,
> But touch me, and no minister so sore.[3]

His works bear overwhelming testimony to the fact. His mind was like inflamed flesh; the touch which a healthy constitution would have disregarded, tortured and enraged him; his smile was a vindictive jeer; and he used with acrimony the rod he professed to kiss. His soreness at censure was the very cause of his charging the weakness upon Dennis. He was angry at the disparagement of his Pastorals, and because he himself was testy, he ridiculed the testiness of his critic. The accusation, according to Dennis, was a malicious invention. "If a man," he said, "is remarkable for the extraordinary deference which he pays to the opinions and

[1] Spence, p. 208.
[2] Ver. 158.
[3] Imitations of Horace, bk. ii. Sat. 1, ver. 75.

Digitized by Google

remonstrances of his friends, him he libels for his impatience under reproof."[1] Though docility was not the virtue of Dennis, his failing was probably overcharged in the Essay on Criticism, for unmeasured exaggeration was a usual fault in the satire of Pope.

In retaining a grudge against those who wounded his self-esteem, Pope did not disdain to profit by their spiteful censorship. "I will make my enemy," he said to Caryll, "do me a kindness where he meant an injury, and so serve instead of a friend," and he requested Trumbull to tell him "where Dennis had hit any blots."[2] He cared too much for his works to be influenced by the stubborn pride which cannot stoop to confess an error. Where the criticism has not been inspired by malice, authors in general have not been intolerant of their critics. Coleridge relates that his thankfulness to the reviewers of his juvenile poems was sincere, when they concurred in condemning his obscurity, turgid language, and profusion of double epithets. Of the obscurity he was unconscious, "and my mind," he says, "was not then sufficiently disciplined to receive the authority of others as a substitute for my own conviction." "The glitter both of thought and diction" he pruned with an unsparing hand, "though, in truth," he adds, "these parasite plants of youthful poetry had insinuated themselves into my longer poems with such intricacy of union that I was often obliged to omit disentangling the weed from the fear of snapping the flower."[3] The candour and manliness are charming, but it must not be overlooked that the magnanimity diminishes as the mental capacity increases. Wakefield well remarks that one reason why those who merit praise can best bear reproof is, that the reproof is either counterbalanced by praise, or by the inward consciousness that the merit is great and will prevail.[4] Inferior writers have not the same consolation. The chief advantage after all which authors derive from the enumeration of their defects is, that it teaches them modesty, and the true limits of their powers. They are seldom able to mend. The qualities they lack are not within their reach; for the mind cannot rise above itself, and has little pliancy when once it has taken its bent.

The notice in the Spectator must have been doubly welcome to Pope after the invective and cavils of Dennis. "In our own country," says Addison, "a man seldom sets up for a poet without attacking the reputation of all his brothers in the art. The ignorance of the moderns, the scribblers of the age, the decay of poetry, are the topics of detraction with which he makes his entrance into the world. I am sorry to find that an author, who is very justly esteemed among

[1] Dennis's Reflections, p. 22.
[2] Pope to Caryll, June 25, 1711; Pope to Trumbull, Aug. 10, 1711.
[3] Biographia Literaria, ed. 1847, vol. i. p. 3.
[4] Wakefield's Works of Pope, p. 168.

Digitized by Google

the best judges, has admitted some strokes of this nature into a very fine poem,—I mean the Art of Criticism, which was published some months since, and is a master-piece of its kind. The observations follow one another like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose author. They are some of them uncommon, but such as the reader must assent to, when he sees them explained with that elegance and perspicuity in which they are delivered. As for those which are the most known, and the most received, they are placed in so beautiful a light, and illustrated with such apt allusions, that they have in them all the graces of novelty, and make the reader, who was before acquainted with them, still more convinced of their truth and solidity. And here give me leave to mention what Monsieur Boileau has so very well enlarged upon in the preface to his works, that wit and fine writing do not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable turn. It is impossible for us, who live in the later ages of the world, to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon lights. If a reader examines Horace's Art of Poetry, he will find but very few precepts in it which he may not meet with in Aristotle, and which were not commonly known by all the poets of the Augustan age. His way of expressing and applying them, not his invention of them, is what we chiefly admire."[1] Pope was delighted. "Moderate praise," he said to Steele, whom he erroneously supposed to have held the pen, "encourages a young writer, but a great deal may injure him; and you have been so lavish in this point that I almost hope,—not to call in question your judgment in the piece—that it was some particular inclination to the author which carried you so far." He accepted in good part the admonition for disparaging his "brother moderns," and expressed his willingness to omit the "strokes" in another edition.[2] He detected none of the "ill-nature" which Warton saw lurking in the phrase "that *some* of the observations were *uncommon*." Addison was familiar with the sources from which the Essay was compiled, and could hardly have been ignorant that even the "some" was a generous license. He pleaded more plausibly for the work when he contended that wit consisted in presenting old thoughts in a better dress, and that the "known truths" in the poem were "placed in so beautiful a light, that they had all the graces of novelty." The charge brought later by Pope against Addison, of

[1] Spectator, No. 253, Dec. 20, 1711.
[2] Pope to Steele, Dec. 30, 1711.

Digitized by Google

viewing him with jealous eyes, suggested to Warton his strained imputation, which is not warranted by the expression he quotes, and is contradicted by the genial tone of the praise. Addison at the time had no acquaintance with Pope. The eulogy on the Essay was spontaneous, and an envious rival would never have adopted the suicidal device of voluntarily publishing a strong panegyric in a periodical which every one read, and of which the decisions were accepted for law.

The truth is, that Addison, by his encomiums and authority, brought into vogue the exaggerated estimate entertained of the Essay. The authors of the next generation read it in their boyhood, and were taught that it was a model of its kind. Juvenile impressions retain their hold, and upon no other supposition could we understand the preposterous opinion of Johnson, that the work set Pope "among the first critics and the first poets," and that he "never afterwards excelled it." Warton disputed the rank assigned to the poet, and assented to the claim put forth for the critic, which was equally untenable. He was misled by his relish for platitudes. "I propose," he said, "to make some observations on such passages and precepts in this Essay as, on account of their utility, novelty, or elegance, deserve particular attention," and his opening specimen of these merits is the line,

> In poets as true genius is but rare.[1]

He selected for distinction several other remarks which were not more exquisite in their form, or recondite in their substance. Hazlitt took up the strain of Johnson and Warton. "The Rape of the Lock," he says, "is a double-refined essence of wit and fancy, as the Essay on Criticism is of wit and sense. The quantity of thought and observation in this work, for so young a man as Pope was when he wrote it, is wonderful; unless we adopt the supposition that most men of genius spend the rest of their lives in teaching others what they themselves have learned under twenty. The conciseness and felicity of the expression are equally remarkable. Thus, in reasoning on the variety of men's opinions, he says,

> 'Tis with our judgments, as our watches; none
> Go just alike, yet each believes his own.

Nothing can be more original and happy than the general remarks and illustrations in the Essay: the critical rules laid down are too much those of a school, and of a confined one."[2] De Quincey, a subtler and sounder critic than Hazlitt, boldly challenged decisions

[1] Essay on the Genius of Pope, 5th ed. vol. i. p. 108.
[2] Lectures on the English Poets, 3rd ed. p. 142.

Digitized by Google

which had passed, but little questioned, from mouth to mouth. "The Essay on Criticism," he says, "is the feeblest and least interesting of Pope's writings, being substantially a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication table, of common-places the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat-traps. The maxims have no natural order or logical dependency, are generally so vague as to mean nothing, and what is remarkable, many of the rules are violated by no man as often as by Pope, and by Pope nowhere so often as in this very poem."[1] The matter of the Essay is not rated, in this passage, below its value.

"I admired," said Lady Mary W. Montagu, "Mr. Pope's Essay on Criticism at first very much, because I had not then read any of the ancient critics, and did not know that it was all stolen."[2] Pope had found the bulk of his materials nearer home. He told Spence that in his youth "he went through all the best critics," and specified Quintilian, Rapin, and Bossu.[3] He states in his Essay, ver. 712, that "critic-learning," in modern times, "flourished most in France," and in fact the Rapins and Bossus were his principal masters. They had been brought into credit with our countrymen by Dryden. "Impartially speaking," he said, in his Dedication to the Æneis, "the French are as much better critics than the English as they are worse poets." He had a wonderful faith in the virtue of their precepts. "Spenser," he said, "wanted only to have read the rules of Bossu; for no man was ever born with a greater genius, or had more knowledge to support it." He compared the French critics to generals, and our celebrated poets to common soldiers; the poet executed what the commanding mind of the critic planned.[4] The treatises which would have perfected the genius of Spenser were shallow drowsy productions, compounded of truisms, pedantic fallacies, and doctrines borrowed from antiquity. Pope culled most of his maxims from these, and other modern works. Many of his remarks were the common property of the civilised world. A slight acquaintance with books and men is sufficient to teach us that people are partial to their own judgment, that some authors are not qualified to be poets, wits, or critics, and that critics should not launch beyond their depth. Such profound reflections, kept up throughout the Essay, owed their credit to the disguising properties of verse. Along with the singular nicety of distinction, and knowledge of mankind, Johnson detected a no less surprising range of ancient and modern learning. Pope mentions Homer, Virgil, and half a dozen Greek and Latin critics. He has characterised some of these critics in a manner

[1] De Quincey's Works, ed. 1862, vol. vii. p. 64; xv. p. 142.
[2] Spence, p. 176.
[3] Spence, p. 147, 211.
[4] Dryden's Virgil, ed. Carey, vol. ii. p. xxxii., lxxxviii.

Digitized by Google

which betrays that he had never looked into their works, and what he says of the rest only required that he should know their writings by repute. All, and more than all, the classical information embodied in the Essay, might have been picked up from his French manuals in a single morning.

A didactic poet who draws his precepts from the truisms and current publications of his day, could not at twenty-three deserve credit for precocity of learning or thought. He might still manifest an early maturity of judgment in sifting the insignificant from the important, the true from the false. Pope did not avoid the trite, but he is said to have evinced a rare capacity for discriminating the true. Bowles agrees with Johnson and Warton that "the good sense in the Essay is extraordinary considering the age of the author," and it is pronounced "an uncommon effort of critical good sense" by Hallam, conspicuous himself for sense and sobriety.[1] Whoever looks through the speciousness of rhyme, and views the ideas in their naked meaning, will be much more struck by the want of good sense in the principal critical canons. They are not even "extraordinary for the age of the author;" versed as he was in English literature they are below his years. They are the narrow, erroneous dogmas of a youth fresh from school-boy studies, who imagined that the Greeks and Romans had ransacked the illimitable realms of genius and taste, and swept off the whole of the spoils. He broadly asserted this doctrine in the poetical creed which he prefixed to his works.[2] He was at least old enough then to know better, from whence it is clear that the common statements respecting him are the opposite of the truth. He did not display the ripe judgment of manhood in his juvenile criticism; he remained a boy in criticism when he was a man.

Follow nature, said Pope, in his Essay, but beware of taking nature at first hand. Homer and nature are the same, and to copy nature is to copy the rules deduced from his works. The ancients sometimes deviated into excellence by throwing off their self-imposed shackles. The moderns must not presume to be irregularly great. They must keep to the precepts, and if they ever break a rule they must at least be able to quote a case precisely parallel from a classical author.[3] The English had not submitted to the wholesome restraint. They had been "fierce for the liberties of wit," and Pope avows his conviction that the entire race of English writers were therefore "uncivilised," with the exception of a few who had "restored among us wit's fundamental laws." He names the most illustrious of these reformers. They were three in number,—the Duke of Buckingham,

[1] Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, 5th ed. vol. iv. p. 228.
[2] Pope's Poetical Works, ed. Elwin, vol. i. p. 9.
[3] Ver. 68, 130—140, 146—157, 161—166.

Digitized by Google

Lord Roscommon, and Walsh.[1] The absurdity could not be exceeded. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton were "uncivilised" writers; they not only fell into minor errors, but set at nought the "*fundamental* laws" of poetry, while the persons who taught how English poetry was to be raised from its rude condition were a trio of prosy mediocrities, whose works might have been annihilated without leaving the smallest vacuum in literature. "The Duke of Buckingham," said Pope later, "was superficial in everything; even in poetry, which was his forte."[2]

Pope seems to have been unconscious of the vast metamorphosis which the world had undergone since the close of the Greek and Roman eras. Religion, institutions, usages, opinions, all had changed. Society was in a ferment with new ideas; nations had been gathered out of new elements; characters were moulded under new influences, and the play of passions, interests, convictions, and policy had assumed new forms. This altered order of things was reflected in our poetry. The mighty men of genius who led the way could not have put aside their genuine thoughts to mimic works which, noble in themselves, were musty and obsolete in modern imitations. The vigorous races which had sprung up drew living pictures from their own minds; they were inspired by national and present sentiments; they stamped upon their verse the feelings, humours, and beliefs of their age. They borrowed from the classics, and sometimes with bad taste; but the extrinsic details they appropriated were not permitted to cramp the masculine elasticity of their native fancy and experience. The materials of the edifice, in the main, were no longer the same, and neither was the shape they assumed. The difference was as great as between a Grecian temple and a Gothic cathedral. The principles which governed the ancients in their compositions were confined, and did not give verge enough for that variety and picturesqueness among ourselves which demanded to be embodied in written words. The originality, which was our glory, appeared a vice to Pope. The adaptation of the structure to its complex purposes he believed to be a declension towards barbarism. He would have preferred that our magnificent English literature, instinct with the freshness of nature, and gathering into its huge circumference the growth of centuries, should have been reduced to a stale and meagre counterfeit. The ancients had the prerogative to make and break critical laws; the moderns must not dare to think for themselves. Genius had been free in Greece, and was to be altogether a slave in England. It cannot be urged in excuse for this protest against the independence of our literature that Pope had imbibed the

[1] Ver. 715—730.

[2] Spence, p. 195.

Digitized by Google

prejudices of his generation. His doctrine was hacknied, but not allowed. He admits that it had few disciples,[1] and one of the three adherents he claimed did not belong to him. "Not only all present poets," wrote Dryden to Walsh, in 1693, "but all who are to come in England will thank you for freeing them from the too servile imitation of the ancients."[2] The rules of Pope could never have prevailed, for they were intrinsically false, and would have emasculated every national literature. The thoughts, words, and deeds of the actual world would not have been impressed upon its books; a gulf would have separated the sympathies of the reader from the feeble, monotonous unrealities of the author, and both author and reader would soon have grown sick of this unnatural effort to be artificial and dull.

An exclusive partisan of classical poetry, Pope did not the less denounce sectarians in wit, the contracted spirits "who the ancients only or the moderns prize," and he exhorted critics "to regard not if wit be old or new."[3] The contradiction in his principles was not accompanied by a corresponding contradiction in his practice, for in no part of his Essay did he rectify his injustice towards his countrymen. He had not one word of commendation for any great English poet, with the exception of Dryden, and him he chiefly extolled, in company with Denham and Waller, for his metrical euphony. Nay, Pope limited the fame of our most illustrious writers to barely threescore years, on the pretence that their language became partially obsolete, which would yet leave them an enormous advantage over dead tongues. Because "length of fame (our second life) is lost," he exhorted the public in common fairness to recognise merit betimes.[4] There was not a semblance of truth in his premise, nor was the plea which he grounded upon it admissible in his mouth. "How vain," he exclaimed, "that second life in other's breath,"[5] and if posthumous fame was worthless there was no claim for compensation. In reality the value is not in the posthumous fame, but in the anticipation which converts it into an immediate possession, the mind feasting in imagination upon plaudits to come. The successful author adds them to the chorus of present praise, and the unsuccessful creates for himself the fame he lacks. The parental partiality which appeals from contemporaries to posterity may deceive, but it soothes and sustains. "A reputation after death," said Jortin, "is like a favourable wind after a shipwreck."[6] Rather the faith in a future reputation is the preservative against shipwreck, unless when men are indifferent to literary immortality.

[1] Ver. 719.
[2] Poetical Works of Dryden, ed. Robert Bell, vol. i. p. 75.
[3] Ver. 395, 406.
[4] Ver. 480
[5] Temple of Fame, ver. 505.
[6] Jortin's Works, vol. xiii. p. 124

Digitized by Google

The ancients, according to Pope, had a moral as well as an intellectual superiority. Of old the poets "who but endeavoured well," were praised by their brethren. Now those who reached the heights of Parnassus "employed their pains in spurning down others." Of old again the professional critic was "generous and fanned the poet's fire." Now critics hated the poet, and all the more that they had learned from him the art of criticism.[1] A freedom from jealousy, a liberality of eulogy were universal with pagans; malice and envy reigned supreme in christendom. Upon this false pretext Pope had the luxury of indulging in the vice he reprobated. He preached up "good-nature," he would suffer no leaven of "spleen and sour disdain,"[2] and his Essay throughout is a diatribe against English critics. The entire crew were spiteful blockheads without sense or principle. The excessive rancour points to some personal offence, and it is probable that his estimate of critics was regulated by their low opinion of his Pastorals, which was the chief work he had hitherto published. When he speaks of poets he keeps no better to the leniency he advocates. He would "sometimes have censure restrained, and would charitably let the dull be vain," upon the uncharitable allegation that the more they were corrected the worse they grew. He engrafts upon his recommendation of a "charitable silence," an invective against the inferior versifiers who, in their old age, have not discovered that they are superannuated. For this inability to detect the decay of their faculties he calls them "shameless bards, impenitently bold."[3] No error of judgment had a stronger claim to be treated with tenderness, and the bitterness of the passage was the less excusable that it was certainly directed against his former friend Wycherley.

There are other contradictions in the Essay, and several of the minor positions are glaringly erroneous. Dennis was within the truth when he said of the whole that it was "very superficial." There remains the question whether the poem is remarkable for the beauty of expression signalised by Addison and Hazlitt. Pope intended his work to be a combination of highly wrought passages, and of that more easy style described by Dryden, when he says—

> And this unpolished, rugged verse I chose,
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.[4]

The parts of the Essay which are pitched in the highest key, are far the best, and where Pope borrowed the imagery, as in the simile of the traveller ascending the Alps, the lines owe their splendour to his improvements. The similes designed to be witty are less happy.

[1] Ver. 511, 514, 100, 629—644, 107.
[2] Ver. 524, 526. [3] Ver. 596—610. [4] Religio Laici.

Digitized by Google

One or two only are good; the rest have little point or appropriateness. Anxious to string together as many smart comparisons as possible, Pope was careless of consistency. Speaking of the futility of abusing paltry versifiers, he says,

> Still humming on, their drowsy course they keep,
> And lashed so long, like tops, are lashed asleep.
> False steps but help them to renew the race,
> As, after stumbling, jades will mend their pace.[1]

The meaning of the first couplet seems to be that bad poets become callous by castigation, and indifferent to censure; the meaning of the second that failure stimulated them to improvement. In the first couplet they proceed from drowsiness to slumber; in the second their false steps stir them up to mend their pace. They are first represented as proceeding from bad to worse, and then from bad to better.

The attempt in the Essay to turn common prose into rhyme is only partially successful. Dryden and Byron, the greatest masters in different ways of the familiar style, pour out words in their natural order with a marvellous vigour and facility. The merit is in this unforced idiomatic flow of the language, unimpeded by the shackles of rhymes. Almost anybody may convert ordinary prose into defective verse, and much of the verse in the Essay on Criticism is of a low order. The phraseology is frequently mean and slovenly, the construction inverted and ungrammatical, the ellipses harsh, the expletives feeble, the metre inharmonious, the rhymes imperfect. Striving to be poetical, Pope fell below bald and slip-shod prose. Examples lie thick, and a couple of specimens will be enough:

> But when t'examine ev'ry part he came.
> Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do.

The transposition of the verb for the sake of the rhyme was the rule with Pope. He habitually succumbed to the difficulty of preserving the legitimate arrangement of words; yet it is an anomaly in literature that with his powers and patient industry he could tolerate such despicable examples of the licence, and this in enunciating hacknied precepts, only to be raised above insipidity by the perfection with which they were moulded into verse. Where the plain portions of the poem are not positively bad, they are seldom of any peculiar excellence. Mediocrity, relieved by occasional well-wrought passages, forms the staple of the work, and Hazlitt must surely have given loose to one of his wilful paradoxes when he contended that the general characteristics of the Essay were originality, thought, strength, terseness, wit, felicitous expression, and brilliant illustration.

[1] Ver. 600—603.

Digitized by Google

In its metrical qualities the Essay on Criticism is the worst of Pope's poems. One blemish is a want of variety in his final words. "There are," says Hazlitt, "no less than half a score couplets rhyming to *sense*. This appears almost incredible without giving the instances, and no less so when they are given."

But of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.—lines 3, 4.

In search of wit, these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defence.—l. 28, 29.

Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.—l. 209, 10.

Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense.—l. 324, 5.

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.—l. 364, 5.

At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride, or little sense.—l. 386, 7.

Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence.—l. 566, 7.

Be niggards of advice on no pretence:
For the worst avarice is that of sense.—l. 578, 9.

Strain out the last dull droppings of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence.—l. 608, 9.

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense.—l. 653, 4.

The corresponding word which forms the rhyme is not always varied. "Offence" is used three times, and "defence" and pretence" are each employed twice.

Hazlitt might have remarked, that *wit* was even more favoured than *sense*, and was used with greater laxity. A wit, in the reign of Queen Anne was not only a jester, but any author of distinction; and wit, besides its special signification, was still sometimes employed as synonymous with mind. The ordinary generic and specific meanings, already confusing and fruitful in ambiguities, were not sufficient for Pope. A wit with him was now a jester, now an author, now a poet, and now, again, was contradistinguished from poets. Wit was the intellect, the judgment, the antithesis to judgment, a joke, and poetry. The word does duty, with a perplexing want of precision, throughout the essay, and furnishes a dozen rhymes alone:

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit,
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.—lines 52, 3.

One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit.—l. 60, 1.

Digitized by Google

A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ.—l. 233, 4.

Nor lose for that malignant dull delight,
The gen'rous pleasure to be charmed with wit.—l. 237, 8.

As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
T' avoid great errors, must the less commit.—l. 259, 60.

Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit;
One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit.—l. 291, 2.

As shades more sweetly recommend the light,
So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit.—l. 301, 2.

So schismatics the plain believers quit,
And are but damned for having too much wit.—l. 428, 9.

Oft, leaving what is natural and fit,
The current folly proves the ready wit.—l. 448, 9.

Jilts ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ:
Nay, wits had pensions, and young lords had wit.—l. 538, 9.

Received his laws; and stood convinced 'twas fit,
Who conquered nature, should preside o'er wit.—l. 651, 2.

He, who supreme in judgment, as in wit,
Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ.—l. 657, 8.

In these twelve instances "wit" rhymes five times to "fit," and three times to "writ." The monotony extends much farther. "Art," in the singular or plural, terminates eight lines, and in every case rhymes to "part," "parts," or "imparts."

Imperfect rhymes abound. The examples which follow occur in the order in which they are set down. "None, own—showed, trod—proved, beloved—steer, character—esteem, them—full, rule—take, track—rise, precipice—thoughts, faults—joined, mankind—delight, wit—appear, regular—caprice, nice—light, wit—good, blood—glass, place—sun, upon—still, suitable—ear, repair—join, line—line, join—Jove, love—own, town—fault, thought—worn, turn—safe, laugh—lost, boast—boast, lost (*bis*)—join, divine—prove, love—ease, increase—care, war—join, shine—disapproved, beloved—take, speak—fool, dull—satires, dedicators—read, head—speaks, makes—extreme, phlegm—find, joined—joined, mind—revive, live—chased, passed—good, blood—desert, heart—receive, give." In numerous instances, "the weight of the rhyme," as Johnson expresses it, when speaking of Denham, "is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it."

Some positive, persisting fops we know,
Who, if once wrong, will needs be always *so*.

We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow,
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us *so*.

Digitized by Google

Several lines are not metrical unless pronounced with a wrong emphasis, as

False eloquēnce like thē prismatic glass,

which only ceases to be prose when "the," and the last syllable of "eloquence," are accentuated, and it is then no longer English. Examples like

Atones not fŏr that envy which it brings;
That ĭn proud dullness joins with quality;
That not alone what tŏ your sense is due;

are not much better. Many of the verses, and this last is a specimen, offend the ear by the succession of "low" and "creeping words." Pope belonged to the class of kings he mentions in his poem, who freely dispensed with the laws they had made.

Johnson, commenting on Pope's attempt to adapt the sound to the sense, thinks it a contradiction, that he employed an Alexandrine to describe the swiftness of Camilla, and thirty years afterwards used the same measure to denote "the march of slow-paced majesty." There was no need to look for an instance at the interval of thirty years. It would have been found at an interval of half thirty lines in the Essay on Criticism, where an Alexandrine is introduced to portray the dragging progress of the wounded snake. The juxtaposition was doubtless deliberate for the purpose of illustrating the opposite movements of sluggishness and celerity. Johnson misunderstood the theory. The Alexandrine was not supposed to represent speed, but space. Thus when Pope describes the wound of Menelaus, in his translation of the Iliad, he says in a note, "Homer is very particular here in giving the picture of the blood running in a long trace, lower and lower. The author's design being only to image the streaming of the blood, it seemed equivalent to make it trickle through the length of an Alexandrine line."

As down thy snowy thigh distilled the streaming flood.

A long line being presumed to suggest the motion of a long distance, the retarded or accelerated motion was intended to be expressed by the slow or rapid syllables of which the line was composed. The end was not answered, because, as Johnson remarks, the break in the middle of the Alexandrine is antagonistic to haste, and he has equally shown that Pope was not happy in the application of his mistaken rule. The slow march outstrips the swift Camilla, who is even left behind by the wounded snake in the first half of the line. Had the examples been a complete illustration of the theory, the gain would have been nothing. Representative metre, in the strict sense of the term, though sanctioned by eminent names, would degrade

Digitized by Google

poetry. There cannot be a paltrier poetic effect than to mimic the roll of stones, the trickling of blood, and the dragging motion of wounded snakes.

"Mr. Walsh used to tell me," says Pope, "that there was one way left of excelling; for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct, and he desired me to make that my study and aim."[1] Warton calls this "very important advice,"[2] and both he and Pope seem to assume that it had been effectual. The notion has been generally accepted. "To distinguish this triumvirate from each other," says Young, "Swift is a singular wit, Pope a correct poet, Addison a great author."[3] "He is the most perfect of our poets," said Byron; "the only poet whose faultlessness has been made his reproach."[4] Hazlitt took the opposite side. "Those critics who are bigoted idolisers of our author, chiefly on the score of his correctness, seem to be of opinion that there is but one perfect writer, even Pope. This is, however, a mistake; his excellence is by no means faultlessness. If he had no great faults, he is full of little errors. His grammatical construction is often lame and imperfect. His rhymes are constantly defective, being rhymes to the eye instead of the ear; and this to a greater degree, not only than in later, but than in preceding, writers. The praise of his versification must be confined to its uniform smoothness and harmony. In the translation of the Iliad, which has been considered as his masterpiece in style and execution, he continually changes the tenses in the same sentence for the purposes of the rhyme, which shows either a want of technical resources, or great inattention to punctilious exactness."[5] De Quincey confirms Hazlitt; but, with his profounder knowledge of the characteristics of Pope's poetry, he saw that the incorrectness was spread wider, and went deeper. "Let us ask," he says, "what is meant by correctness? Correctness in developing the thought? In connecting it, or effecting the transitions? In the use of words? In the grammar? In the metre?" In all these points he maintains that Pope, "by comparison with other great poets, was conspicuously deficient."[6] For an example of incorrectness in developing the thought De Quincey refers to the character of Addison:

> Who would not laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who but must weep if Atticus were he?

"Why must we laugh? Because we find a grotesque assembly of

[1] Spence, p. 212. [2] Essay on the Genius of Pope, vol. i. p. 195.
[3] Works of Edward Young, ed. Doran, vol. ii. p. 578.
[4] Moore's Life of Byron, 1 vol. ed., p. 699.
[5] Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Poets, p. 145.
[6] De Quincey's Works, vol. xv. p. 141; xii. p. 58.

Digitized by Google

noble and ignoble qualities. Very well; but why, then, must we weep? Because this assemblage is found actually existing in an eminent man of genius. Well, that is a good reason for weeping; we weep for the degradation of human nature. But then revolves the question, Why must we laugh? Because, if the belonging to a man of genius were a sufficient reason for weeping, so much we know from the very first. The very first line says,

> Peace to all such: but were there one whose fires
> *True genius kindles*, and fair fame aspires.

Thus falls to the ground the whole antithesis of this famous character. We are to change our mood from laughter to tears upon a sudden discovery that the character belonged to a man of genius; and this we had already known from the beginning. Match us this prodigious oversight in Shakspeare."[1] Pope was still more deficient in logical correctness, in the power of preserving consistency, and coherency between congregated ideas. "Of all poets," says De Quincey, "that have practised reasoning in verse he is the one most inconsequential in the deduction of his thoughts, and the most severely distressed in any effort to effect or to explain the dependency of their parts. There are not ten consecutive lines in Pope unaffected by this infirmity. All his thinking proceeded by insulated and discontinuous jets, and the only resource for him, or chance of even seeming correctness, lay in the liberty of stringing his aphoristic thoughts, like pearls, having no relation to each other but that of contiguity."[2] Many of his arguments are capable of a double construction; absolute contradictions are not uncommon; and when we try to get a connected view of his principles we are irritated by their discordance, indefiniteness, and obscurity. As little will his grammar bear the test of correctness. "His syntax," says De Quincey, "is so bad as to darken his meaning at times, and at other times to defeat it. Preterites and participles he constantly confounds, and registers this class of blunders for ever by the cast-iron index of rhymes that never *can* mend." Another defect of language was, in De Quincey's opinion, "almost peculiar to Pope." "The language does not realise the idea: it simply suggests or hints it. Thus, to give a single illustration:

> Know God and Nature only are the same;
> In man the judgment shoots at flying game.

The first line one would naturally construe into this: that God and Nature were in harmony, whilst all other objects were scattered into incoherency by difference and disunion. Not at all; it means nothing

[1] De Quincey's Works, vol. xv. p. 142.
[2] De Quincey's Works, vol. viii. p. 14.

Digitized by Google

of the kind; but that God and Nature only are exempted from the infirmities of change. This *might* mislead many readers; but the second line *must* do so: for who would not understand the syntax to be, that the judgment, as it exists in man, shoots at flying game? But, in fact, the meaning is, that the judgment in aiming its calculations at man, aims at an object that is still on the wing, and never for a moment stationary."[1] This, De Quincey contends, is the worst of all possible faults in diction, since perspicuity, ungrammatical and inelegant, is preferable to conundrums of which the solution is difficult, and often doubtful. He says that there are endless varieties of the vice in Pope, and that "he sought relief for himself from half an hour's labour at the price of utter darkness to his reader." De Quincey was in error when he imputed the imperfections to indolence. There never was a more painstaking poet than Pope. His works were slowly elaborated, and diligently revised. "I corrected," he says, "because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write,"[2] and his manuscripts attest his untiring efforts to mend his composition. Language and not industry failed him. Happy in a multitude of phrases, lines, couplets, and passages, his vocabulary and turns of expression were often unequal to the exactions of verse. Not even rhymes, dearly purchased by violations of grammar and a false order of words, nor the imperfection of the rhymes themselves, could always enable him to satisfy the double requirement of metre and clearness. Most of his usual deviations from correctness are especially prominent in the Essay on Criticism, and any one who reads it with common attention might be tempted to think that the claim which Warton and others set up for Pope, was an insidious device to injure his reputation by diverting attention from his merits, and basing his fame upon a foundation too unstable to support it. The advice of Walsh was foolish. A poet who believed originality to be exhausted, and who merely aspired to echo his predecessors, with no distinguishing quality of his own beyond some additional correctness, might have spared his pains. The correct imitator would be intolerable by the side of the fresh and vigorous genius he copied. The assumption that the domain of poetic thought had been traversed in every direction, and that no untrodden paths were left for future explorers, was itself a delusion, soon to be refuted by Pope's own Rape of the Lock. Many immortal works have since belied the shallow doctrine of Walsh, who made his dim perceptions the measure of intellectual possibilities. The aspects under which the world, animate and inanimate, may be regarded by the poet are practically endless. The latent truths of science do not offer to the philosopher a more unbounded field of novelty.

[1] De Quincey's Works, vol. viii. p. 15—17.
[2] Pope's Poetical Works, ed. Elwin, vol. i. p. 7.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION: That it is as great a fault to judge ill, as to write ill, and a more dangerous one to the public, ver. 1—That a true taste is as rare to be found as a true genius, ver. 9 to 18—That most men are born with some taste, but spoiled by false education, ver. 19 to 25—The multitude of critics, and causes of them, ver. 26 to 45—That we are to study our own taste, and know the limits of it, ver. 46 to 67—Nature the best guide of judgment, ver. 68 to 87—Improved by art and rules, which are but methodised nature, ver. 88—Rules derived from the practice of the ancient poets, ver. 88 to 110—That therefore the ancients are necessary to be studied by a critic, particularly Homer and Virgil, ver. 120 to 138—Of licenses, and the use of them by the ancients, ver. 142 to 180—Reverence due to the ancients, and praise of them, ver. 181, &c.

PART II. VER. 201, &c.

Causes hindering a true judgment—1. Pride, ver. 208—2. Imperfect learning, ver. 215—3. Judging by parts, and not by the whole, ver. 233 to 288—Critics in wit, language, versification, only, ver. 288, 305, 339, &c.—4. Being too hard to please, or too apt to admire, ver. 384—5. Partiality, too much love to a sect, to the ancients or moderns, ver. 394—6. Prejudice or prevention, ver. 408—7. Singularity, ver. 424—8. Inconstancy, ver. 430—9. Party spirit, ver. 452, &c.—10. Envy, ver. 466—Against envy and in praise of good nature, ver. 508, &c.—When severity is chiefly to be used by critics, ver. 526, &c.

PART III. VER. 560, &c.

Rules for the conduct of manners in a critic—1. Candour, ver. 563—Modesty, ver. 566—Good breeding, ver. 572—Sincerity and freedom of advice, ver. 578. 2. When one's counsel is to be restrained, ver. 584—Character of an incorrigible poet, ver. 600—And of an impertinent critic, ver. 610—Character of a good critic, ver. 629—The history of criticism, and characters of the best critics, Aristotle, ver. 645—Horace, ver. 653—Dionysius, ver. 665—Petronius, ver. 667—Quintilian, ver. 670—Longinus, ver. 675—Of the decay of criticism, and its revival. Erasmus, ver. 693—Vida, ver. 705—Boileau, ver. 714—Lord Roscommon, &c. ver. 725—Conclusion.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

AN

ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.[1]
'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share;[2]
Both must alike from heav'n derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.
Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely, who have written well.[3]

[1] Dryden's Epilogue to All for Love:

This difference grows,
Betwixt our fools in verse, and yours in prose.

[2] An extravagant assertion. Those who can appreciate, are beyond comparison more numerous than those who can produce, a work of genius.

[3] Qui scribit artificiose, ab aliis commode scripta facile intelligere proterit. Cic. ad Herenn. lib. iv. De pictore, sculptore, fictore, nisi artifex, judicare non potest. Pliny.—POPE.

Poets and painters must appeal to the world at large. Wretched indeed would be their fate, if their merits were to be decided only by their rivals. It is on the general opinion of persons of taste that their individual estimation must ultimately rest, and if the public were excluded from judging, poets might write and painters paint for each other.—ROSCOE.

The execution of a work and the appreciation of it when executed are separate operations, and all experience

Digitized by Google

Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not critics to their judgment too?
Yet, if we look more closely, we shall find
Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind:[1]
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light,
The lines, though touched but faintly, are drawn right;
But as the slightest sketch, if justly traced,
Is by ill-colouring but the more disgraced,[2]
So by false learning is good sense defaced:[3]
Some are bewildered in the maze of schools,[4]
And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools.[5]
In search of wit, these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defence:[6]

has shown that numbers pronounce justly upon literature, architecture, and pictures, though they may not be able to write like Shakespeare, design like Wren, or paint like Reynolds. Taste is acquired by studying good models as well as by emulating them. Pope, perhaps, copied Addison, Tatler, Oct. 19, 1710: "It is ridiculous for any man to criticise on the works of another who has not distinguished himself by his own performances."

[1] Omnes tacito quodam sensu, sine ulla arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus ac rationibus, recta et prava dijudicant. Cic. de Orat. lib. iii.—POPE.

[2] The phrase "*more* disgraced" implies that slight sketches "justly traced" are a disgrace at best, whereas they have often a high degree of merit.

[3] Plus sine doctrina prudentia, quam sine prudentia valet doctrina. Quint.—POPE.

[4] Between ver. 25 and 26 were these lines, since omitted by the author:

Many are spoiled by that pedantic throng,
Who with great pains teach youth to reason wrong.
Tutors, like virtuosos, oft inclined
By strange transfusion to improve the mind,
Draw off the sense we have, to pour in new;
Which yet, with all their skill, they ne'er could do.—POPE.

The transfusion spoken of in the fourth verse of this variation is the transfusion of one animal's blood into another.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] "Nature," it is said in the Spectator, No. 404, "has sometimes made a fool, but a coxcomb is always of a man's own making, by applying his talents otherwise than nature designed." The idea is expressed more happily by Dryden in his Hind and Panther:

For fools are doubly fools endeav'ring to be wise.

Pope contradicts himself when he says in the text that the men made coxcombs by study were meant by nature but for fools, since they are among his instances of persons upon whom nature had bestowed the "seeds of judgment," and who possessed "good sense" till it was "defaced by false learning."

[6] Dryden's Medal:

The wretch turned loyal in his own defence.

Digitized by Google

Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a rival's, or an eunuch's spite.[1]
All fools have still an itching to deride,
And fain would be upon the laughing side.[2]
If Mævius scribble in Apollo's spite,[3]
There are who judge still worse than he can write.

Some have at first for wits, then poets passed,
Turned critics next, and proved plain fools at last.
Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.[4]
Those half-learned witlings, num'rous in our isle,
As half-formed insects on the banks of Nile;[5]
Unfinished things, one knows not what to call,[6]
Their generation's so equivocal:[7]

[1] The couplet ran thus in the first edition, with less neatness and perspicuity:

Those hate as rivals all that write; and others
But envy wits as eunuchs envy lovers.

The inaccuracy of the rhymes excited him to alteration, which occasioned a fresh inconvenience, that of similar rhymes in the next couplet but one.—WAKEFIELD.

Dryden's Prologue to the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada:

They who write ill, and they who ne'er durst write,
Turn critics out of mere revenge and spite.

[2] In the manuscript there are two more lines, of which the second was afterwards introduced into the Dunciad:

Though such with reason men of sense abhor;
Fool against fool is barb'rous civil war.
Though Mævius scribble and the city knight, &c.

The city knight was Sir Richard Blackmore, who resided in Cheapside. "In the early part of Blackmore's time," says Johnson, "a citizen was a term of reproach, and his place of abode was a topic to which his adversaries had recourse in the penury of scandal."

[3] Dryden's Persius, Sat. i. 100:

Who would be poets in Apollo's spite.

[4] "The simile of the mule," says Warton, "heightens the satire, and is new," but the comparison fails in the essential point. Pope's "half-learn'd witlings," who aim at being wit and critic, are inferior to both, whereas the mule, to which he likens the literary pretender, is in speed and strength superior to the ass.

[5] "I am confident," says Dryden in the dedication of his Virgil, "that you will look on those half-lines hereafter as the imperfect products of a hasty muse, like the frogs and serpents in the Nile, part of them kindled into life, and part a lump of unformed, unanimated mud."

[6] The diction of this line is coarse, and the construction defective.—WAKEFIELD.

The omission of "them" after "call" exceeds the bounds of poetic licence.

[7] Equivocal generation is the production of animals without parents. Many of the creatures on the

Digitized by Google

To tell 'em would a hundred tongues require,
Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire.[1]
But you who seek to give and merit fame,
And justly bear a critic's noble name,
Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,
How far your genius, taste, and learning go;[2]
Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.
Nature to all things fixed the limits fit,
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.
As on the land while here the ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid pow'r of understanding fails;[3]
Where beams of warm imagination play,[4]
The memory's soft figures melt away.[5]

Nile were supposed to be of this class, and it was believed that they were fashioned by the action of the sun upon the slime. The notion was purely fanciful, as was the idea that the insects were half-formed—a compound of mud and organisation.

[1] Dryden's Persius, v. 36:

For this a hundred voices I desire
To tell thee what an hundred tongues would tire.

"I have often thought," says the author of the Supplement to the Profound, speaking of Pope's couplet, "that one pert fellow's tongue might tire a hundred pair of attending ears; but I never conceived that it could communicate any lassitude to the tongues of the bystanders before." The evident meaning of Pope is that it would tire a hundred ordinary tongues to talk as much as one vain wit, but the construction is faulty.

[2] This is a palpable imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, 38:

Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam
Viribus; et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
Quid valeant humeri.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Pope is unfortunate in his selection of instances to illustrate his position that the various mental faculties are never concentrated in the same individual. Men of great intellect have sometimes bad memories, and a good memory is sometimes found in persons of a feeble intellect; but it is a monstrous paradox to assert that a retentive memory and a powerful understanding cannot go together. No one will deny that Dr. Johnson and Lord Macaulay were gifted with vigorous, brilliant minds; yet the memory of the first was extraordinary, and that of the second prodigious. In general, men of transcendent abilities have been remarkable for their knowledge.

[4] Dryden, in his Character of a Good Parson:

But when the milder beams of mercy play.
—WAKEFIELD.

[5] From the second couplet, apparently meant to be the converse of the first, one would suppose that he

Digitized by Google

One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit:[1]
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confined to single parts.
Like kings we lose the conquests gained before,
By vain ambition still to make them more
Each might his sev'ral province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand.
First follow nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard,[2] which is still the same:
Unerring nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,[3]
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,[4]
At once the source, and end, and test of art.

considered the understanding and imagination as the same faculty, else the counterpart is defective.—WARTON.

The structure of the passage requires the interpretation put upon it by Warton, in which case the language is incorrect. The statement is not even true of the imagination proper, as the example of Milton would alone suffice to prove. His imagination was grand, and the numberless phrases he adopted from preceding writers evince that it was combined with a memory unusually tenacious.

[1] This position seems formed from the well-known maxim of Hippocrates, which is found at the entrance of his aphorisms, "Life is short, but art is long."—WAKEFIELD.

The standard of excellence in any art or science, must always be that which is attained by the persons who follow it with the greatest success; and those who give themselves up to a particular pursuit will, with equal talents, eclipse the rivals who devote to it only fragments of time. For this reason men can rarely attain to the highest skill in more than one department, however many accomplishments they may possess in a minor degree. The native power to shine in various callings may exist, but the practice which can alone make perfect, is wanting.

[2] These are the words of Lord Shaftesbury in his Advice to an Author: "Frame taste by the just standard of nature." The principle is as old as poetry, and has been laid down by multitudes of writers; but the difficulty, as Bowles remarks, is to determine what is "nature," and what is "her just standard." "Nature" with Pope meant Homer.

[3] Roscommon's Essay:

Truth still is one: Truth is divinely bright;
No cloudy doubts obscure her native light.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry by Sir William Soame and Dryden, canto i.

Love reason then, and let whate'er you write [light.
Borrow from her its beauty, force, and

Digitized by Google

Art from that fund each just supply provides;
Works without show, and without pomp presides:
In some fair body thus th' informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole,[2]
Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains;
Itself unseen, but in th' effects remains.[3]
Some, to whom heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;[4]
For wit and judgment often are at strife,[5]
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'Tis more to guide, than spur the muse's steed;
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,[6]
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.
Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but nature methodised;[7]

[1] In the early editions,

That art is best which most resembles her,
Which still presides, yet never does appear.

[2] Dryden's Virgil, Æn. vi. 982:

—— one common soul
Inspires, and feeds, and animates the whole.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] So Ovid, exactly, Metam. iv. 287: causa latet; vis est notissima.—WAKEFIELD.

Duke of Buckingham's Essay on Poetry:

A spirit which inspires the work throughout,
As that of nature moves the world about;
Itself unseen, yet all things by it shown.

[4] In all editions before the quarto of 1743, it was,

There are whom heav'n has blest with store of wit,
Yet want as much again to manage it.

The idea was suggested by a sentence in Sprat's Account of Cowley: "His fancy flowed with great speed, and therefore it was very fortunate to him that his judgment was equal to manage it." Pope gave a false sparkle to his couplet by first using "wit" in one sense and then in another. "Wit to manage wit," says the author of the Supplement to the Profound, "is full as good as one tongue's tiring another. Any one may perceive that the writer meant that judgment should manage wit; but as it stands it is pert." Warburton observes that Pope's later version magnified the contradiction; for he who had already "a profusion of wit," was the last person to need more.

[5] "Ever are at strife," was the reading till the quarto of 1743.

[6] We shall destroy the beauty of the passage by introducing a most insipid parallel of perfect sameness, if we understand the word "like" as introducing a simile. It is merely as if he had said: "Pegasus, as a generous horse is accustomed to do, shows his spirit most under restraint." Our author might have in view a couplet of Waller's, in his verses on Roscommon's Poetry:

Direct us how to back the winged horse,
Favour his flight, and moderate his force.
—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Dryden's preface to Troilus and

Digitized by Google

Nature, like liberty,[1] is but restrained
By the same laws which first herself ordained.
Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights:
High on Parnassus' top her sons she showed,
And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,[2]
And urged the rest by equal steps to rise.
Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,[3]
She drew from them what they derived from heav'n.[4]
The gen'rous critic fanned the poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire.
Then criticism the muse's handmaid proved,
To dress her charms, and make her more beloved:
But following wits from that intention strayed,
Who could not win the mistress, wooed the maid;[5]
Against the poets their own arms they turned,
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learned.[6]

Cressida: "If the rules be well considered, we shall find them to be made only to reduce nature into method."

[1] It was "monarchy" until the edition of 1743.

[2] Translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry, by Dryden and Soame:

And afar off hold up the glorious prise.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Nec enim artibus editis factum est ut argumenta inveniremus, sed dicta sunt omnia antequam præciperentur; mox ea scriptores observata et collecta ediderunt. Quintil.—POPE.

[4] This seems to have been suggested by a couplet in the Court Prospect of Hopkins:

How are these blessings thus dispensed and giv'n? [heav'n.
To us from William, and to him from

[5] After this verse followed another, to complete the triplet, in the first impressions:

Set up themselves, and drove a sep'rate trade.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] A feeble line of monosyllables, consisting of ten low words.—WARTON.

The entire passage seems to be constructed on some remarks of Dryden in his Dedication to Ovid: "Formerly the critics were quite another species of men. They were defenders of poets, and commentators on their works, to illustrate obscure beauties, to place some passages in a better light, to redeem others from malicious interpretations. Are our auxiliary forces turned our enemies? Are they from our seconds become principals against us?" The truth of Pope's assertion, as to the matter of fact, will not bear a rigorous inquisition, as I believe these critical persecutors of good poets to have been extremely few, both in ancient and modern times.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

So modern 'pothecaries, taught the art
By doctors' bills[1] to play the doctor's part,
Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.
Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey,
Nor time nor moths e'er spoiled[2] so much as they;
Some dryly plain, without invention's aid,
Write dull receipts how poems may be made;
These leave the sense, their learning to display,
And those explain the meaning quite away.

You then whose judgment the right course would steer,
Know well each ancient's proper character;
His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
Religion, country, genius of his age:[3]
Without all these at once before your eyes,
Cavil you may,[4] but never criticise.[5]

[1] The prescription of the physician was formerly called his bill. Johnson, in his Dictionary, quotes from L'Estrange, "The medicine was prepared according to the bill," and Butler, in Hudibras, speaks of

him who took the doctor's bill,
And swallowed it instead of the pill.

The story ran that a physician handed a prescription to his patient, saying, "Take this," and the man immediately swallowed it.

[2] This is a quibble. Time and moths spoil books by destroying them. The commentators only spoiled them by explaining them badly. The editors were so far from spoiling books in the same sense as time, that by multiplying copies they assisted to preserve them.

[3] Soame and Dryden's Translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry:

Keep to each man his proper character;
Of countries and of times the humours know;
From diff'rent climates diff'ring customs grow.

The principle here is general. Pope, in terms and in fact, applied it only to the ancients. Had he extended the precept to modern literature he would have been cured of his delusion that every deviation from the antique type arose from unlettered tastelessness.

[4] In the first edition,

You may confound, but never criticise,

which was an adaptation of a line from Lord Roscommon:

You may confound, but never can translate.

[5] The author, after this verse, originally inserted the following, which he has however omitted in all the editions:

Zoilus, had those been known, without a name [to fame;
Had died, and Perrault ne'er been damned
The sense of sound antiquity had reigned,
And sacred Homer yet been unprophaned.
None e'er had thought his comprehen- } sive mind [fined; {
To modern customs, modern rules con- {
Who for all ages writ, and all mankind.
Be his great works, &c.—Pope.

Perrault, in his Parallel between the ancients and the moderns, carped at Homer in the same spirit that Zoilus had done of old.

Digitized by Google

Be Homer's works your study and delight,
Read them by day, and meditate by night;[1]
Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the muses upward to their spring.[2]
Still with itself compared, his text peruse;[3]
And let your comment be the Mantuan muse.

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A work t' outlast[4] immortal Rome designed,[5]
Perhaps he seemed above the critic's law,
And but from nature's fountain scorned to draw:
But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.

[1] Horace, Ars Poet., ver. 268:

vos exemplaria Græca
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.

Tate and Brady's version of the first psalm:

But makes the perfect law of God
His business and delight;
Devoutly reads therein by day,
And meditates by night.

—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden, Virg. Geor. iv. 408:

And upward follow Fame's immortal spring.
—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse:

Consult your author with himself compared.

[4] The word outlast is improper; for Virgil, like a true Roman, never dreamt of the mortality of the city.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Variation:

When first young Maro sung of kings and wars,
Ere warning Phœbus touched his trembling ears.

Cum canerem reges et prælia, Cynthius aurem
Vellit. Virg. Ecl. vi. 3.

It is a tradition preserved by Servius, that Virgil began with writing a poem of the Alban and Roman affairs, which he found above his years, and descended, first to imitate Theocritus on rural subjects, and afterwards to copy Homer in heroic poetry.—POPE.

The second line of the couplet in the note was copied, as Mr. Carruthers points out, from Milton's Lycidas:

Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears.

The couplet in the text, with the variation of "great Maro" for "young Maro," was Pope's original version, but Dennis having asked whether he intended "to put that figure called a bull upon Virgil" by saying that he designed a work "to outlast immortality," the poet wrote in the margin of his manuscript "alter the seeming inconsistency," which he did, by substituting the lines in the note. In the last edition, he reinstated the "bull." The objection of Dennis was hypercritical. The phrase only expresses the double fact that the city was destroyed, and that its fame was durable. The manuscript supplies another various reading, which avoids both the alleged bull in the text, and the bad rhyme of the couplet in the note:

When first his voice the youthful Maro tried,
Ere Phœbus touched his ear and checked his pride.

Digitized by Google

Convinced, amazed, he checks the bold design:
And rules as strict his laboured work confine,[1]
As if the Stagyrite[2] o'erlooked each line.[3]
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
To copy nature is to copy them.[4]
Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles poetry; in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,[5]
And which a master hand alone can reach.
If, where the rules not far enough extend,[6]
(Since rules were made but to promote their end,)
Some lucky licence answer to the full
Th' intent proposed, that licence is a rule.
Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track.

[1] And did his work to rules as strict confine.—Pope.

[2] Aristotle, born at *Stagyra*, B.C. 384.—Croker.

[3] In the manuscript a couplet follows which was added by Pope in the margin, when he erased the expression "a work t' outlast immortal Rome:"

"Arms and the Man," then rung the world around,
And Rome commenced immortal at the sound.

[4] When Pope supposes Virgil to have properly "checked in his bold design of drawing from nature's fountain," and in consequence to have confined his work within rules as strict,

As if the Stagyrite o'erlooked each line,

how can he avoid the force of his own ridicule, where a little further, in this very piece, he laughs at Dennis for

Concluding all were desp'rate sots and fools,
Who durst depart from Aristotle's rules.—
Dr. Aikin.

The argument of Pope is sophistical and inconsistent. It is inconsistent, because if Virgil found Homer and nature the same, his work would not have been confined within stricter rules when he copied Homer than when he copied nature. It is sophistical, because though Homer may be always natural, all nature is not contained in his works.

[5] Rapin's Critical Works, vol. ii. p. 178: "There are no precepts to teach the hidden graces, and all that secret power of poetry which passes to the heart."

[6] Neque enim rogationibus plebisve scitis sancta sunt ista præcepta, sed hoc, quicquid est, utilitas excogitavit. Non negabo autem sic utile esse plerumque; verum si eadem illa nobis aliud suadebit utilitas, hanc, relictis magistrorum auctoritatibus, seque-

Digitized by Google

Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,[1]
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;[2]
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,[3]
Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.
In prospects, thus, some objects please our eyes,
Which out of nature's common order rise,[4]
The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.[5]
But though the ancients thus their[6] rules invade,
(As kings dispense with laws themselves have made,[7])
Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end;

mur. Quintil. lib. ii. cap. 13.—POPE.

[1] Dryden's Aurengzebe:

Mean soul, and dar'st not gloriously offend!
—STEEVENS.

[2] This couplet, in the quarto of 1743, was for the first time placed immediately after the triplet which ends at ver. 160. The effect of this arrangement was that "Pegasus," instead of the "great wits," became the antecedent to the lines, "From vulgar bounds," &c., and the poetic steed was said to "snatch a grace." Warton commented upon the absurdity of using such language of a horse, and since it is evident that Pope must have overlooked the incongruity, when he adopted the transposition, the lines were restored to their original order in the editions of Warton, Bowles, and Roscoe.

[3] So Soame and Dryden of the Ode, in the Translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry:

Her generous style at random oft will part,
And by a brave disorder shows her art.

And again:

A generous Muse, [art,
When too much fettered with the rules of
May from her stricter bounds and limits part.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] This allusion is perhaps inaccurate. The shapeless rock, and hanging precipice do not rise out of nature's common order. These objects are characteristic of some of the features of nature, of those especially that are picturesque. If he had said that amid cultivated scenery we are pleased with a hanging rock, the allusion would have been accurate.—BOWLES.

The criticism of Bowles does not apply to the passage in Sprat's Account of Cowley, from which Pope borrowed his comparison: "He knew that in diverting men's minds there should be the same variety observed as in the prospects of their eyes, where a rock, a precipice, or a rising wave is often more delightful than a smooth even ground, or a calm sea."

[5] Another couplet originally followed here:

But care in poetry must still be had;
It asks discretion ev'n in running mad:
And though, &c.

which is the *insanire cum ratione* taken from Terence by Horace, at Sat. ii. 3, 271.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] "Their" means "their own."—WARTON.

[7] Dryden in his dedication to the

Digitized by Google

Let it be seldom, and compelled by need;
And have, at least, their precedent to plead.
The critic else proceeds without remorse,
Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.
I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults.[1]
Some figures monstrous and mis-shaped[2] appear,
Considered singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportioned to their light, or place,
Due distance reconciles to form and grace.[3]
A prudent chief not always must display[4]
His pow'rs in equal rank, and fair array,
But with th' occasion and the place comply,
Conceal his force, nay, seem sometimes to fly.
Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,[5]
Nor is it Homer nods but we that dream.[6]

Æneis: "Virgil might make this anachronism by superseding the mechanic rules of poetry, for the same reason that a monarch may dispense with or suspend his own laws."

[1] Pope's manuscript supplies two omitted lines:

The boldest strokes of art we may despise,
Viewed in false lights with undiscerning eyes.

[2] A violation of grammatical propriety, into which many of our first and most accurate writers have fallen. "Mishapen" is doubtless the true participle.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Pope took his imagery from Horace, Ars Poet., 361:

Ut pictura, poesis erit: quæ, si propius stes, [abstes:
Te capiat magis; et quædam, si longius
Hæc amat obscurum; volet hæc sub luce videri.

He was also indebted to the translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry by Dryden and Soame:

Each object must be fixed in the due place,
And diff'ring parts have corresponding grace.

[4] Οἷον τι ποιοῦσιν οἱ φρόνιμοι στρατηλάται κατὰ τὰς τάξεις τῶν στρατευμάτων. Dion. Hal. De Struct. Orat.—WARBURTON.

[5] It may be pertinent to subjoin Roscommon's remark on the same subject:

——— Far the greatest part
Of what some call neglect is studied art.
When Virgil seems to trifle in a line,
'Tis but a warning piece which gives the sign,
To wake your fancy and prepare your sight
To reach the noble height of some unusual flight.—WARTON.

Variety and contrast are necessary, and it is impossible all parts should be equally excellent. Yet it would be too much to recommend introducing trivial or dull passages to enhance the merit of those in which the whole effort of genius might be employed.—BOWLES.

[6] Modeste, et circumspecto judicio de tantis viris pronunciandum est, ne (quod plerisque accidit) damnent quod non intelligunt. Ac si necesse est in alteram errare partem, omnia

Digitized by Google

Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;[1]
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.[2]
See, from each clime, the learn'd their incense bring;
Hear, in all tongues consenting Pæans ring!
In praise so just let ev'ry voice be joined,
And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind.[3]
Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;[4]
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;

eorum legentibus placere, quam multa displicere maluerim. Quint.—POPE.

Lord Roscommon was not disposed to be so diffident in those excellent verses of his Essay:

For who, without a qualm, hath ever looked [cooked?
On holy garbage, though by Homer
Whose railing heroes, and whose wounded gods,
Make some suspect he snores as well as nods.—WAKEFIELD.

Pope originally wrote in his manuscript,

Nor Homer nods so often as we dream,

which was followed by this couplet:

In sacred writ where difficulties rise,
'Tis safer far to fear than criticise.

[1] So Roscommon's epilogue to Alexander the Great:

Secured by higher pow'rs exalted stands
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] The poet here alludes to the four great causes of the ravage amongst ancient writings. The destruction of the Alexandrine and Palatine libraries by fire; the fiercer rage of Zoilus, Mævius, and their followers, against wit; the irruption of the barbarians into the empire; and the long reign of ignorance and superstition in the cloisters.—WARBURTON.

I like the original verse better—

Destructive war, and all-devouring age,—

as a metaphor much more perspicuous and specific.—WAKEFIELD.

In his epistle to Addison, Pope has "all-devouring age," but the epithet here is more original and striking, and admirably suited to the subject. This shows a nice discrimination. "All-involving" would be as improper in the Essay on Medals as "all-devouring" would be in this place.—BOWLES.

A couplet in Cooper's Hill suggested the couplet of Pope:

Now shalt thou stand, though sword, or time, or fire, [spire.
Or zeal more fierce than they, thy fall con-

[3] Thus in a poem on the Fear of Death, ascribed to the Duke of Wharton:

——— There rival chiefs combine
To fill the gen'ral chorus of her reign.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Cowley on the death of Crashaw:

Hail, bard triumphant.

Virg. Æn. vi. 649:

Magnanimi heroes! nati melioribus annis.—WAKEFIELD.

Dryden's Religio Laici:

Those giant wits in happier ages born.

From Pope's manuscript it appears that he had originally written

Hail, happy heroes, born in better days.

Digitized by Google

Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
And worlds applaud, that must not yet be found![1]
O may some spark of your celestial fire,
The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes,)
To teach vain wits a science little known,
// T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own! //

II.

Of all the causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,
What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
Is pride, the never-failing vice of fools.
Whatever nature has in worth denied,[2]
She gives in large recruits of needful pride;
For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find
What wants in blood and spirits, swelled with wind:[3]
Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.
If once right reason drives that cloud away,
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.

In a note he gave the line from Virgil of which his own was a translation.

[1] An imitation of Cowley, David. ii. 833:

Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall sound
And reach to worlds that must not yet be found.—Wakefield.

[2] Oldham's Elegies:

What nature has in bulk to me denied.

[3] "Everybody allows," says Malebranche, "that the animal spirits are the most subtle and agitated parts of the blood. These spirits are carried with the rest of the blood to the brain, and are there separated by some organ destined to the purpose." Pope adopted the doctrine "allowed by everybody," but which consisted of assumptions without proof. The very existence of these fluid spirits had never been ascertained. The remaining physiology of Pope's couplet was erroneous. When there is a deficiency of blood, its place is not supplied by wind. The grammatical construction, again, is vicious, and ascribes "blood and spirits" to souls as well as to bodies. The moral reflection illustrated by the simile is but little more correct. Men in general are not proud in proportion as they have nothing to be proud of.

Digitized by Google

Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
Make use of ev'ry friend and ev'ry foe.
A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:[1]
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the muse imparts,[2]
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,[3]
While from the bounded level of our mind,
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;[4]
But more advanced, behold with strange surprise,
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleased at first the tow'ring Alps we try,[5]
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
But those attained, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthened way,
Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise![6]

[1] Pope is commonly considered to have laid down the general proposition that total ignorance was preferable to imperfect knowledge. The context shows that he was speaking only of conceited critics, who were presumptuous because they were ill-informed. He tells such persons that the more enlightened they become the humbler they will grow.

[2] In the early editions,

Fired with the charms fair science does impart.

Though "does" is removed, "with what" is less dignified and graceful than "with the charms." The diction of the couplet is prosaic and devoid of elegance.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Dryden, in the State of Innocence, Act i. Sc. i.:

Nor need we tempt those heights which angels keep.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] The proper word would have been "beyond."

[5] [Much we begin to doubt and much to fear
Our sight less trusting as we see more clear.]
So pleased at first the tow'ring Alps to try,
Filled with ideas of fair Italy,
The traveller beholds with cheerful eyes
The less'ning vales, and seems to tread the skies.—POPE.

The couplet between brackets is from the manuscript. The next couplet, with a variation in the first line, was transferred to the epistle to Jervas.

[6] This is, perhaps, the best simile in our language—that in which the most exact resemblance is traced between things in appearance utterly unrelated to each other. — JOHNSON.

I will own I am not of this opinion. The simile appears evidently to have

Digitized by Google

A perfect judge will read each work of wit[1]
With the same spirit that its author writ:[2]
Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find
Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;
Nor lose for that malignant dull delight,
The gen'rous pleasure to be charmed with wit.
But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,[3]
Correctly cold,[4] and regularly low,
That, shunning faults, one quiet tenour keep,
We cannot blame indeed, but we may sleep.
In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.[5]
Thus when we view some well-proportioned dome,
(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome![6])
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to th' admiring eyes;

been suggested by the following one in the works of Drummond:

All as a pilgrim who the Alps doth pass,
Or Atlas' temples crowned with winter's glass,
The airy Caucasus, the Apennine,
Pyrene's cliffs where sun doth never shine,
When he some heaps of hills hath overwent,
Begins to think on rest, his journey spent,
Till mounting some tall mountain he doth find
More heights before him than he left behind.—WARTON.

The simile is undoubtedly appropriate, illustrative, and eminently beautiful, but evidently copied.—BOWLES.

[1] Diligenter legendum est ac pæne ad scribendi solicitudinem: nec per partes modo scrutanda sunt omnia, sed perlectus liber utique ex integro resumendus. Quint.—POPE.

[2] The Bible never descends to the mean colloquial preterites of "chid" for "did chide," or "writ" for "did write," but always uses the full-dress word "chode" and "wrote." Pope might have been happier had he read his Bible more, but assuredly he would have improved his English.—DE QUINCEY.

[3] Boileau's Art of Poetry by Dryden and Soame, canto i.:

A frozen style, that neither ebbs or flows,
Instead of pleasing makes us gape and doze.

[4] Much in the same strain Garth's Dispensary, iv. 24:

So nicely tasteless, so correctly dull.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] This is an adaptation of a couplet in Dryden's Eleonora:

Nor this part musk, or civet can we call,
Or amber, but a rich result of all.

[6] It is impossible to determine whether he refers to St. Peter's or the Pantheon.

Digitized by Google

No monstrous height, or breadth, or length, appear;[1]
The whole at once is bold, and regular.
Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.[2]
In ev'ry work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.[3]
As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
T' avoid great errors, must the less commit:
Neglect the rules each verbal critic lays,[4]
For not to know some trifles is a praise.[5]
Most critics, fond of some subservient art,
Still make the whole depend upon a part:
They talk of principles, but notions prize,
And all to one loved folly sacrifice.
Once on a time, La Mancha's knight, they say,[6]
A certain bard encount'ring on the way,

[1] An impropriety of the grossest kind is here committed. Grammar requires "appears."—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden's translation of Ovid's Met. book xv.

Greater than whate'er was, or is, or e'er shall be.—HOLT WHITE.

Epilogue to Suckling's Goblins:

Things that ne'er were, nor are, nor ne'er will be.—ISAAC REED.

[3] Horace, Ars Poet. 351:

Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis.

[4] *Lays* for *lays down*, but, as Warton remarks, the word thus used is very objectionable.

[5] To the same effect Quintilian, lib. i. Ex quo mihi inter virtutes grammatici habebitur, aliqua nescire.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] The incident is taken from the Second Part of Don Quixote, first written by Don Alonzo Fernandez de Avellanada, and afterwards translated, or rather imitated and new-modelled, by no less an Author than the celebrated Le Sage. "But, Sir, quoth the Bachelor, if you would have me adhere to Aristotle's rules, I must omit the combat. Aristotle, replied the Knight, I grant was a man of some parts; but his capacity was not unbounded; and, give me leave to tell you, his authority does not extend over combats in the list, which are far above his narrow rules. Believe me the combat will add such grace to your play, that all the rules in the universe must not stand in competition with it. Well, Sir Knight, replied the Bachelor, for your sake, and for the honour of chivalry, I will not leave out the combat. But still one difficulty remains, which is, that our common theatres are not large enough for it. There must be one erected on purpose, answered the

Digitized by Google

Discoursed in terms as just, with looks as sage,
As e'er could Dennis, of the Grecian stage;[1]
Concluding all were desp'rate sots and fools,
Who durst depart from Aristotle's rules.
Our author, happy in a judge so nice,
Produced his play, and begged the knight's advice;
Made him observe the subject, and the plot,
The manners, passions, unities, what not,
All which, exact to rule, were brought about,
Were but a combat in the lists left out.
"What! leave the combat out!" exclaims the knight:
Yes, or we must renounce the Stagyrite.
"Not so, by heav'n!" he answers in a rage,
"Knights, squires, and steeds, must enter on the stage."
So vast a throng the stage can ne'er contain.
"Then build a new, or act it in a plain."[2]
Thus critics of less judgment than caprice,
Curious not knowing,[3] not exact but nice,
Form short ideas; and offend in arts,
As most in manners, by a love to parts.[4]
Some to conceit alone their taste confine,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at ev'ry line;
Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit;
One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit.

Knight; and in a word, rather than leave out the combat, the play had better be acted in a field or plain."—WARTON.

[1] In all editions till the quarto of 1743,

As e'er could D——s of the laws o' th' stage.

[2] In the manuscript the reply of the knight is continued through another couplet:

In all besides let Aristotle sway,
But knighthood's sacred, and he must give way.

[3] The phrase "curious not knowing," is from Petronius, and Pope has written the words of his original on the margin of the manuscript: Est et alter, non quidem doctus, sed curiosus, qui plus docet quam scit.

[4] The conventionalities of foppery and ceremony are always changing, and what Pope says of manners may have been extensively true of his own generation. At present bad manners commonly proceed either from defective sensibility, or from men having more regard to themselves than to their company

Digitized by Google

Poets, like painters, thus unskilled to trace
The naked nature, and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.[1]
True wit is nature[2] to advantage dressed;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed;[3]
Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.
As shades more sweetly recommend the light,[4]
So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit;[5]

[1] This had been the practice of some artists. "Their heroes," says Reynolds, speaking of the French painters in 1752, "are decked out so nice and fine that they look like knights-errant just entering the lists at a tournament in gilt armour, and loaded most unmercifully with silk, satin, velvet, gold, jewels, &c." Pope had in his mind a passage of Cowley's Ode on Wit:

Yet 'tis not to adorn, and gild each part;
That shows more cost than art.
Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear;
Rather than all things wit, let none be there.

[2] Naturam intueamur, hanc sequamur: id facillimè accipiunt animi quod agnoscunt. Quint. lib. 8, c. 3. —POPE.

Dryden's preface to the State of Innocence: "The definition of wit, which has been so often attempted, and ever unsuccessfully, by many poets, is only this, that it is a propriety of thoughts and words."

[3] Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous; he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.—JOHNSON.

The error was in stating a partial as an universal truth; for the second line of the couplet correctly describes the quality which gives the charm to numberless passages both in prose and verse. Instead of "ne'er so well," the reading of the first edition was "ne'er before," which was not equally true. But Pope followed the passage in Boileau, from which the line in the Essay on Criticism was derived: "Qu'est-ce qu'une pensée neuve, brillante, extraordinaire? Ce n'est point, comme se le persuadent les ignorants, une pensée que personne n'a jamais eu, ni dû avoir. C'est au contraire une pensée qui a dû venir à tout le monde, et que quelqu'un s'avise le premier d'exprimer. Un bon mot n'est bon mot qu'en ce qu'il dit une chose que chacun pensoit, et qu'il la dit d'une manière vive, fine et nouvelle."

[4] Light "sweetly recommended" by shades, is an affected form of speech. "Does 'em good," in the next couplet, offends in the opposite direction, and is meanly colloquial.

[5] Two lines, which follow in the manuscript, are, from such a poet, worth quoting as a curiosity, since in the ruggedness of the metre, the badness of the rhyme, and the grossness of the metaphor, they are among the worst that were ever written:

Justly to think, and readily express,
A full conception, and brought forth with ease.

Digitized by Google

For works may have more wit than does 'em good,[1]
As bodies perish through excess of blood.
Others for language all their care express,
And value books, as women men, for dress:
Their praise is still,—the style is excellent;
The sense, they humbly take upon content.[2]
Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found:
False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
Its gaudy colours spreads on ev'ry place;
The face of nature we no more survey,
All glares alike, without distinction gay:
But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.[3]
Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent,[4] as more suitable:[5]
A vile conceit in pompous words expressed
Is like a clown in regal purple dressed:

[1] "Let us," says Mr. Webb, in a passage quoted by Warton, "substitute the definition in the place of the thing, and it will stand thus: 'A work may have more of nature dressed to advantage than will do it good.' This is impossible, and it is evident that the confusion arises from the poet having annexed different ideas to the same word."

[2] "Take upon content" for "take upon trust" was a form of speech sanctioned by usage in Pope's day. Thus Rymer says of Hart the actor, "What he delivers every one takes upon content. Their eyes are prepossessed and charmed by his action."

[3] Nothing can be more just, or more ably and eloquently expressed than this observation and illustration respecting the character of false eloquence. Fine words do not make fine poems, and there cannot be a stronger proof of the want of real genius than those high colours and meretricious embellishments of language, which, while they hide the poverty of ideas, impose on the unpractised eye with a gaudy semblance of beauty.—Bowles.

[4] "Decent" has not here the signification of modest, but is used in the once common sense of becoming, attractive.

[5] Dryden's preface to All for Love: "Expressions are a modest clothing of our thoughts, as breeches and petticoats are for our bodies." Pope's couplet should have been more in accordance with his precept. "Still" is an expletive to piece out the line, and upon this superfluous word, he has thrown the emphasis of the rhyme, which, in its turn, is mean and imperfect.

Digitized by Google

For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,
As sev'ral garbs with country, town, and court.
Some by old words to fame have made pretence,[1]
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense;
Such laboured nothings, in so strange a style,
Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.
Unlucky, as Fungoso in the play,[2]
These sparks with awkward vanity display
What the fine gentleman wore yesterday;
And but so mimic ancient wits at best,
As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.
In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold;
Alike fantastic, if too new, or old:
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,[3]
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong:[4]
In the bright muse, though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.[5]

[1] Abolita et abrogata retinere, insolentiæ cujusdam est, et frivolæ in parvis jactantiæ. Quint. lib. i. c. 6.

Opus est, ut verba a vetustate repetita neque crebra sint, neque manifesta, quia nil est odiosius affectatione, nec utique ab ultimis repetita temporibus. Oratio cujus summa virtus est perspicuitas, quam sit vitiosa, si egeat interprete? Ergo ut novorum optima erunt maxime vetera, ita veterum maxime nova. Idem.—POPE.

[2] See Ben Jonson's Every Man out of his Humour.—POPE.

Dryden's Dedication to the Assignation: "He is only like Fungoso in the play, who follows the fashion at a distance."

[3] If Pope's maxim was universally obeyed no new word could be introduced. Dryden was more judicious. "When I find," he said, "an English word significant and sounding, I neither borrow from the Latin nor any other language; but when I want at home I must seek abroad."

[4] Quis populi sermo est? quis enim? nisi carmina molli [severos
Nunc demum numero fluere, ut per læve
Effundat junctura ungues: scit tendere versum
Non secus ac si oculo rubricam dirigat uno.—Pers., Sat. i.—POPE.

Garth in the Dispensary:

Harsh words, though pertinent, uncouth appear;
None please the fancy who offend the ear.

[5] "There" is a feeble excrescence to force a rhyme.

Digitized by Google

These equal syllables alone require,
Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire;[1]
While expletives their feeble aid do join;[2]
And ten low words[3] oft creep in one dull line:[4]

[1] Fugiemus crebras vocalium concursiones, quæ vastam atque hiantem orationem reddunt. Cic. ad Heren. lib. iv. Vide etiam Quintil. lib. ix. c. 4.—POPE.

Vowels were said to open on each other when two words came together of which the first ended, and the second commenced with a vowel. Pope has illustrated the fault by crowding three consecutive instances into his verse. The poets diminished the conflict of vowels by a free recourse to elisions. The most usual were the cutting off the "e" in "the," as "th' unlearned," ver. 327; and the "o" in "to," as "t' outlast," ver. 131, "t' examine," ver. 134, "t' admire," ver. 200. The two words were thus fused into one, and the old authors combined them in writing as well as in the pronunciation. The manuscripts of Chaucer have "texcuse," not "t' excuse;" "thapostle," not "th' apostle." The custom has not kept its ground. Whatever might be supposed to be gained in harmony by the conversion of "to examine" into "texamine," or of "the unlearned" into "thunlearned" was more than lost by the departure from the common forms of speech.

[2] "The characters of bad critic and bad poet are grossly confounded; for though it be true that vulgar readers of poetry are chiefly attentive to the melody of the verse, yet it is not they who admire, but the paltry versifier who employs monotonous syllables, feeble expletives, and a dull routine of unvaried rhymes." Essays Historical and Critical.—WARTON.

[3] "Low" in contradistinction to lofty. The phrase would now mean coarse and vulgar words.

[4] From Dryden. "He creeps along with ten little words in every line, and helps out his numbers with *for*, *to*, and *unto*, and all the pretty expletives he can find, while the sense is left half-tired behind it." Essay on Dram. Poetry.—WARBURTON.

A collection of monosyllables when it arises from a correspondence of subject is highly meritorious. Let a single example from Milton suffice:

O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death.

How successfully does this range of little words represent to our imaginations,

The growing labours of the lengthened way
—WAKEFIELD.

"It is pronounced by Dryden," says Johnson, "that a line of monosyllables is almost always harsh. This is evidently true, because our monosyllables commonly begin and end with consonants." As Dryden expressed it, "they are clogged with consonants," and "it seldom," he says, "happens but a monosyllable line turns verse to prose, and even that prose is rugged and inharmonious." The authority of Dryden has led many persons to mistrust their own ears, and imagine, like Johnson and Wakefield, that monosyllables were only fitted at best to produce some special effect. Numerous examples in Dryden's poetry contradict his criticism, and Milton abounds in

Digitized by Google

While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes;[1]
Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line, it "whispers through the trees:"
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threatened, not in vain, with "sleep:"[2]
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.[3]

sweet and sonorous monosyllabic lines, as Par. Lost, v. 193:

His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow
Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye pines,
With ev'ry plant, in sign of worship wave.

And ver. 199:

ye birds,
That singing up to heaven gate ascend,
Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise.

Melodious lines, such as the first verse in the first of these passages, which have the monosyllables relieved but by a single dissyllable, are past counting up. Addison praised Pope for exemplifying the faults in the language which condemned them. "The gaping of the vowels in the second line, the expletive 'do' in the third line, and the ten monosyllables in the fourth, give such a beauty to this passage, as would have been very much admired in an ancient poet." The feat was too easy to call for much admiration. There was more difficulty in eschewing than in mimicking the vicious style of bad versifiers. Pope himself has not avoided the frequent use of "low words" and "feeble expletives."

[1] Atterbury's Preface to Waller's Poems: "He had a fine ear, and knew how quickly that sense was cloyed by the same round of chiming words still returning upon it."

[2] Hopkins's translation of Ovid's Met., book xi.:

No tame nor savage beast dwells there; no breeze [the trees:
Shakes the still boughs, or whispers thro'
Here easy streams with pleasing murmurs creep,
At once inviting and assisting sleep.—
WAKEFIELD.

Pope uses these trite ideas and "unvaried chimes" himself. In the fourth Pastoral we have "gentle breeze, trembling trees, whispering breeze, dies upon the trees," and in Eloisa we have "the curling breeze, panting on the trees."—CROKER.

Pope took the idea from Boileau:

Si je louois Philis "en miracles féconde,"
Je trouverois bientôt, "à nulle autre seconde;"
Si je voulois vanter un objet "nonpareil,"
Je mettrois à l'instant, "plus beau que le soleil;"
Enfin, parlant toujours d' "astres" et de "merveilles,"
De "chefs-d'œuvres des cieux," de "beautés sans pareilles."

[3] Dryden in his Annus Mirabilis, stanza 128:

So glides the trodden serpent on the grass,
And long behind his wounded volume trails.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes,[1] and know
What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow;
And praise[2] the easy vigour of a line,
Where Denham's strength, and Waller's sweetness join.[3]
True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,[4]
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.[5]
Soft is the strain when zephyr gently blows,[6]
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,[7]
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,[8]
The line too labours, and the words move slow:[9]

[1] Boileau's Art of Poetry translated by Soame and Dryden:

Those tuneful readers of their own dull rhymes.

[2] The construction might be for anything that the composition shows to the contrary, "leave such to praise," which is subversive of the poet's meaning.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Sufficient justice is not done to Sandys, who did more to polish and tune the English versification by his Psalms and his Job, than those two writers, who are usually applauded on this subject.—WARTON.

Bowles adds his testimony to "the extraordinary melody and vigour" of the versification of Sandys. Ruffhead, in his life of Pope, having called the Ovid of Sandys an "indifferent translation," Warburton has written on the margin, "He was not an indifferent, but a very fine translator and versifier."

[4] Writers who seem to have composed with the greatest ease have exerted much labour in attaining this facility. It is well known that the writings of La Fontaine were laboured into that facility for which they are so famous, with repeated alterations and many erasures. Moliere is reported to have passed whole days in fixing upon a proper epithet or rhyme, although his verses have all the flow and freedom of conversation. I have been informed that Addison was so extremely nice in polishing his prose compositions that when almost a whole impression of a Spectator was worked off he would stop the press to insert a new preposition or conjunction.—WARTON.

[5] Lord Roscommon says:

The sound is still a comment to the sense.
—WARBURTON.

The whole of this passage on the adaptation of the sound to the sense is imitated, and, as may be seen by the references of Warburton, is in part translated, from Vida's Art of Poetry.

[6] Tum is læta canunt, &c. Vida, Poet. l. iii. ver. 403.—WARBURTON.

[7] Tum longe sale saxa sonant, &c. Vida, Poet. l. iii. v. 388.—WARBURTON.

[8] Atque ideo si quid geritur molimine magno, [verba laborent
Adde moram et pariter tecum quoque Segnia. Vida, ib. 417.—WARBURTON.

[9] At mora si fuerit damno, properare jubebo, &c. Vida, ib. 420.—WARBURTON.

Digitized by Google

Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn,[1] and skims along the main.[2]
Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,[3]
And bid alternate passions fall and rise![4]
While at each change, the son of Libyan Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love;
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:[5]
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdued by sound!
The pow'r of music all our hearts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.[6]

[1] Our poet here endeavours to fasten on Virgil a most insufferable absurdity, which no poetical hyperbole will justify, namely, the reality of these wonderful performances, a flight over the unbending corn, and across the sea with unbathed feet. Virgil only puts the supposition, and speaks of her extraordinary velocity in the way of comparison, that she seemed capable of accomplishing so much had she made the attempt. She could fly, if she had chosen, nor would have injured, in that case, the tender blades of corn.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] The verse intended to represent the whisper of the vernal breeze must surely be confessed not much to excel in softness or volubility; and the smooth stream runs with a perpetual clash of jarring consonants. The noise and turbulence of the torrent is, indeed, distinctly imaged; for it requires very little skill to make our language rough. But in the lines which mention the effort of Ajax, there is no particular heaviness or delay. The swiftness of Camilla is rather contrasted than exemplified. Why the verse should be lengthened to express speed, will not easily be discovered. In the dactyls, used for that purpose by the ancients, two short syllables were pronounced with such rapidity, as to be equal only to one long; they therefore naturally exhibit the act of passing through a long space in a short time. But the Alexandrine, by its pause in the midst, is a tardy and stately measure; and the word "unbending," one of the most sluggish and slow which our language affords, cannot much accelerate its motion.—JOHNSON.

Wakefield says that "the tripping word *labours*, in ver. 371, is unhappy," and Aaron Hill contended that three at least of the five concluding words of the line "danced away upon the tongue with a tripping and lyrical lightness."

[3] See Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music; an Ode by Mr. Dryden.—POPE.

[4] This resembles a line in Hughes's Court of Neptune:

Beholds th' alternate billows all and rise.
—WAKEFIELD.

[5] And now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow. Dryden.—
WAKEFIELD.

[6] Pope confounds vocal and instrumental with poetical harmony. Timotheus owed his celebrity to his

Digitized by Google

Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such,
Who still are pleased too little or too much.
At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride, or little sense:
Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best,
Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.
Yet let not each gay turn thy rapture move;
For fools admire, but men of sense approve:[1]
As things seem large which we through mists descry,
Dulness is ever apt to magnify.
Some foreign writers,[2] some our own despise;
The ancients only, or the moderns prize.
Thus wit, like faith, by each man is applied
To one small sect, and all are damned beside.[3]

music, and Dryden never wrote a note.

[1] Creech's translation of Horace's Art of Poetry:

men of sense retire,
The boys abuse, and only fools admire.

Aaron Hill says, that Pope was very fond of the line in the text, and often repeated it. Hill, who "abhorred the sentiment," once asked him if he still adhered to the opinion of Longinus, that the true sublime thrilled and transported the reader. On Pope replying in the affirmative, his interrogator pressed him with the contradiction, and the perplexed poet, according to Hill's report, took refuge in nonsense, and made this unintelligible answer,—"that Longinus's remark was truth, but that, like certain truths of more importance, it required assent from faith, without the evidence of demonstration." It must be evident that Shakespeare, Milton, and scores besides, are worthy of admiration; and no man would show his sense by protesting that he did not admire but only approved of them. Pope is inconsistent, for at ver. 236 he speaks of "*rapture* warming the mind," and of "the generous pleasure to be *charmed* with wit."

[2] In all editions before the quarto of 1743, "Some the French writers."

[3] This was directed against Pope's co-religionists, and greatly annoyed them. The offence was not that he had misrepresented their views, but that he had denounced a doctrine which all zealous papists maintained. "Nothing," he said, when writing in vindication of the passage to Caryll, "has been so much a scarecrow to our opponents as that too peremptory and uncharitable assertion of an utter impossibility of salvation to all but ourselves. I own to you I was glad of any opportunity to express my dislike of so shocking a sentiment as those of the religion I profess are commonly charged with, and I hoped a slight insinuation, introduced by a casual similitude only, could never have given offence, but on the contrary, must needs have done good in a nation wherein we are the smaller party, and consequently most misrepresented, and most in need of vindication." The Roman Catholics

Digitized by Google

Meanly they seek the blessing to confine,
And force that sun but on a part to shine,
Which not alone the southern wit sublimes,
But ripens spirits in cold northern climes;
Which, from the first has shone on ages past,
Enlights[1] the present, and shall warm the last;
Though each may feel increases and decays,[2]
And see now clearer and now darker days:
Regard not then if wit be old or new,
But blame the false, and value still the true.
Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,[3]
But catch the spreading notion of the town:
They reason and conclude by precedent,
And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then
Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.
Of all this servile herd, the worst is he
That in proud dulness joins with quality,[4]
A constant critic at the great man's board,
To fetch and carry nonsense for my lord.
What woeful stuff this madrigal would be,
In some starved hackney sonneteer, or me![5]
But let a lord once own the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!

took to themselves the couplet "Meanly they seek," which followed the simile, but Pope pointed out that the plural "some," and not the singular "each man," was the antecedent to "they." The comparison was not kept up throughout the paragraph, and the lines after ver. 397 refer solely to the critics.

[1] The word "enlights" is, I believe, of our poet's coinage, analogically formed from "light," as "enlighten" from "lighten."—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Sir Robert Howard's poem against the Fear of Death:

And neither gives increase, nor brings decay.

[3] There is very little poetical expression from this line to ver. 450. It is only mere prose fringed with rhyme. Good sense in a very prosaic style; reasoning, not poetry.—WARTON.

[4] "Joins with quality" for "joins with men of rank" is a vulgar colloquialism.

[5] In sing-song Durfey, Oldmixon or me,

was the original reading of the manuscript.

Digitized by Google

Before his sacred name flies ev'ry fault,
And each exalted stanza teems with thought!
The vulgar thus through imitation err;
As oft the learn'd by being singular;
So much they scorn the crowd, that if the throng
By chance go right, they purposely go wrong:
So schismatics the plain believers quit,[2]
And are but damned for having too much wit.
Some praise at morning what they blame at night;
But always think the last opinion right.
A muse by these is like a mistress used,
This hour she's idolised, the next abused;
While their weak heads, like towns unfortified,
'Twixt sense and nonsense daily change their side.[3]
Ask them the cause; they're wiser still they say;
And still to-morrow's wiser than to-day.
We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow;
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so.
Once school divines this zealous isle o'erspread;
Who knew most Sentences,[4] was deepest read;

[1] This couplet is succeeded by two more lines in the manuscript:

And while to thoughts refined they make pretence, [sense.
Hate all that's common, ev'n to common

[2] In the first edition the reading was "dull believers," which Pope in the second edition altered to "plain." The change was occasioned by the outcry against the couplet. "An ordinary man," he wrote to Caryll, "would imagine the author plainly declared against these schismatics for quitting the true faith out of contempt of the understanding of some few of its believers. But these believers are called 'dull,' and because I say that these schismatics think some believers dull, therefore these charitable well-disposed interpreters of my meaning say that I think all believers dull." There is a culpable levity in the language of Pope's lines, but he could not intend to espouse the cause of the sceptics when he selects them as an instance of people who "purposely go wrong" because "the crowd go right."

[3] If this couplet is interpreted by the grammatical construction, the "unfortified towns daily changed their sides" in consequence of vacillating "betwixt sense and nonsense." Of course Pope only meant that in war weak towns frequently changed sides, but not for the same reason that weak heads changed their opinions.

[4] The Book of Sentences was a work of Peter Lombard, which consisted of subtle disquisitions on theology. Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary upon it.

Digitized by Google

Faith, gospel, all, seemed made to be disputed,
And none had sense enough to be confuted:
Scotists and Thomists,[1] now, in peace remain,
Amidst their kindred cobwebs[2] in Duck-lane.[3]
If faith itself has diff'rent dresses worn,
What wonder modes in wit should take their turn?[4]
Oft, leaving what is natural and fit,
The current folly proves the ready wit;
And authors think their reputation safe,
Which lives as long as fools are pleased to laugh.
Some valuing those of their own side or mind,
Still make themselves the measure of mankind:
Fondly we think we honour merit then,
When we but praise ourselves in other men.
Parties in wit attend on those of state,
And public faction doubles private hate.[5]

[1] St. Thomas Aquinas died in 1274. Scotus, who died in 1308, disputed the doctrines of his predecessor, and their respective disciples divided for a century the theological world.—CROKER.

[2] Cowley speaks of "the cobwebs of the schoolmen's trade," and says in a note, "the distinctions of the schoolmen may be likened to cobwebs either because of the too much fineness of the work, or because they take not the materials from nature, but spin it out of themselves."

[3] A place where old and second-hand books were sold formerly, near Smithfield.—POPE.

[4] Between this and verse 448 :

The rhyming clowns that gladded Shakespear's age,
No more with crambo entertain the stage.
Who now in anagrams their patron praise,
Or sing their mistress in acrostic lays?
Ev'n pulpits pleased with merry puns of yore;
Now all are banished to th' Hibernian shore!
[And thither soon soft op'ra shall repair,
Conveyed by Sw—y to his native air.
There, languishing awhile, prolong its breath,
Till like a swan it sings itself to death.]
Thus leaving what was natural and fit,
The current folly proved their ready wit;
And authors thought their reputation safe,
Which lived as long as fools were pleased to laugh.—POPE.

The lines between brackets are from the manuscript, and were not printed by Pope. The whole passage was probably written after the poem was first published, since the topics seem to have been suggested by Addison's papers upon false wit in the Spectator of May, 1711, where the anagrams, acrostics, and punning sermons of the reign of James I. are all enumerated. Swiney was the director of the Italian opera, which, at the commencement of 1712, failed to meet with adequate support, and he withdrew, not to Ireland, but to the continent. "He remained there," says Cibber, "twenty years, an exile from his friends and country."

[5] An additional couplet follows in the manuscript :

To be spoke ill of, may good works befall,
But those are bad of which none speak at all.

Digitized by Google

Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaus;[1]
But sense survived when merry jests were past;
For rising merit will buoy up at last.
Might he return, and bless once more our eyes,[2]
New Blackmores and new Milbournes must arise:[3]
Nay, should great Homer lift his awful head,
Zoilus[4] again would start up from the dead.

[1] The parson alluded to was Jeremy Collier; the critic was the Duke of Buckingham; the first of whom very powerfully attacked the profligacy, and the latter the irregularity and bombast of some of Dryden's plays. These attacks were much more than merry jests.—WARTON.

[2] Dryden himself, Virg. Geor. iv. 729:

But she returned no more to bless his longing eyes.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Blackmore's attack upon Dryden occurs in a poem which appeared in 1700, called a Satire against Wit. The author treats wit as money, and proposes that the whole should be recoined for the purpose of separating the base metal from the pure.

Into the melting pot when Dryden comes
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink when all his lewd allay
And wicked mixture shall be purged away!
When once his boasted heaps are melted down,
A chestful scarce will yield one sterling crown.

This is exaggerated, but the censure is directed against the indecency which was really infamous. The invectives of Milbourne in his Notes on Dryden's Virgil, 1698, had not the same excuse. The strictures are confined to the translation of the Eclogues and Georgics, and are throughout rabid, insolent, coarse, and contemptible. To demonstrate his own superiority, Milbourne inserted specimens of a rival translation, which is on a par with his criticisms. He was in orders, and acknowledges that one of his reasons for not sparing Dryden was that Dryden never spared a clergyman. "I am only," replied the poet, with exquisite sarcasm, "to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his part of the reparation will come to little." Dryden retaliated upon both antagonists together in the couplet,

Wouldst thou be soon dispatched, and perish whole? Trust Maurus with thy life, and Milbourne with thy soul.

Pope's line in the first edition was

New Bl——s and new M——s must arise.

In the second edition he substituted S——s, which meant Shadwells, for Bl——s, but in the quarto of 1717 he again coupled Blackmore with Milbourne, and printed both names at full length. Blackmore was living, and the changes indicate Pope's varying feelings towards him.

[4] In the fifth book of Vitruvius is an account of Zoilus's coming to the court of Ptolemy at Alexandria, and presenting to him his virulent and brutal censures of Homer, and begging to be rewarded for his work; instead of which, it is said, the king ordered him to be crucified, or, as some said, stoned. His person is minutely described in the eleventh book of Ælian's various History.—WARTON.

Boileau's Art of Poetry, translated by Soame and Dryden:

Let mighty Spenser raise his reverend head,
Cowley and Denham start up from the dead.

Digitized by Google

Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue;
But like a shadow, proves the substance true:
For envied wit, like Sol eclipsed, makes known
Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too pow'rful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays;
But ev'n those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories, and augment the day.[1]
Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost, who stays till all commend.
Short is the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that golden age appears,
When patriarch wits survived a thousand years:
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast;[2]
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.
So when the faithful pencil has designed
Some bright idea of the master's mind,

[1] A beautiful and poetical illustration. Pope has the art of enlivening his subject continually by images and illustrations drawn from nature, which by contrast have a particularly pleasing effect, and which are indeed absolutely necessary in a didactic poem. —Bowles.

The passage originally stood thus in the manuscript:

Wit, as the sun, such pow'rful beams displays,
It draws up vapours that obscures its rays,
But, like the sun eclipsed, makes only known
The shadowing body's grossness, not its own;
And all those clouds that did at first invade
The rising light, and interposed a shade
When once transpierced with its prevailing ray
Reflect its glories, and augment the day.

[2] His instance refuted his position that "bare threescore" was the duration of modern fame. "It is now a hundred years," said Dennis in 1712, "since Shakespeare began to write, more since Spenser flourished, and above three hundred years since Chaucer died. And yet the fame of none of these is extinguished." Another century and a half has elapsed, and the reputation of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare is greater than ever. The notion of the "failing language" is not more sound. Though it is a hundred and fifty years since the Essay on Criticism was published, there is not a line which has an antiquated air.

Digitized by Google

Where a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light;
When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treach'rous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away!
Unhappy wit, like most mistaken things,[1]
Atones not for that envy which it brings.
In youth alone its empty praise we boast,[2]
But soon the short-lived vanity is lost:
Like some fair flow'r the early spring supplies,[4]
That gaily blooms, but ev'n in blooming dies.
What is this wit, which must our cares employ?[5]
The owner's wife,[6] that other men enjoy;
Then most our trouble still when most admired,
And still the more we give, the more required;[7]

[1] The treach'rous colours in few years decay.—POPE.

The next line is from Addison:

And all the pleasing landscape fades away.

[2] That is, of which those, who do not possess it, form an erroneous estimate, as productive of more happiness and enjoyment to the owner, than he really receives from it.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] In the previous paragraph Pope admitted that the fame of a modern might last three-score years. Here, contradicting himself and the facts, he limits its duration to the youth of the author. He applies to poets in general what was only true of inferior writers. The ephemeral versifiers were examples of deficient "wit," and not of the unhappy consequences of genuine poetic power.

[4] Like some fair flow'r that in the spring does rise.—POPE.

This line was an example both of the "feeble expletive" and of the "ten low words." "Supplies" in the amended version is, as Wakefield observes, a poor expression.

[5] The Duke of Buckingham's Vision:

The dearest care that all my thought employs.

[6] Wakefield objects to the "slovenly superfluity of words," and asks "to whom can a wife possibly belong but the owner?" He misunderstood Pope, who, by "the wife of the owner," meant the wife of the owner of the wit. The metaphor is coarse, and out of keeping with the theme.

[7] Thus in the first edition:

The more his trouble as the more admired,
Where wanted scorned, and envied where acquired.

Against this Pope wrote, "To be altered. See Dennis, p. 20." "How," said Dennis, "can wit be scorned where it is not? The person who wants this wit may indeed be scorned,

Digitized by Google

Whose fame with pains we guard, but lose with ease,[1]
Sure some to vex, but never all to please;
'Tis what the vicious fear, the virtuous shun,
By fools 'tis hated, and by knaves undone!
If wit so much from ign'rance undergo,
Ah let not learning too commence its foe![2]
Of old, those met rewards who could excel,
And such were praised who but endeavour'd well:[3]
Though triumphs were to gen'rals only due,
Crowns were reserved to grace the soldiers too.
Now, they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown,[4]
Employ their pains to spurn some others down;
And while self-love each jealous writer rules,
Contending wits become the sport of fools:[5]

but such a contempt declares the honour that the contemner has for wit." Pope, in a letter to Caryll, admitted that he had been guilty of a bull, and the reading in the second edition was,

'Tis most our trouble when 'tis most admired,
The more we give, the more is still required.

[1] In the first edition,

Maintained with pains, but forfeited with ease;

and in the second edition,

The fame with pains we gain, but lose with ease.

The original version appears better than the readings which successively replaced it.

[2] Another couplet follows in the manuscript:

Learning and wit were friends designed by heav'n; [giv'n.
Those arms to guard it, not to wound, were

[3] Dryden's Prologue to the University of Oxford:

Be kind to wit, which but endeavours well,
And, where you judge, presumes not to excel.

The feelings of antiquity were doubtless represented truly by Horace when he said that indifferent poets were not tolerated by anybody. There is not the least foundation for Pope's statement that it was the habit of old to praise bad authors for endeavouring well, and if it had been, the authors would not have cared for commendations on their abortive industry to the disparagement of their intellect.

[4] Wakefield remarks upon the unhappy effect of "crowns" and "crown" in consecutive lines, and thinks the phrase "some others" in the next verse too mean and elliptical. Soame and Dryden, in their translation of Boileau's Art of Poetry, speak of the "base rivals" who

aspire to gain renown
By standing up and pulling others down.

[5] Mr. Harte related to me, that being with Mr. Pope when he received the news of Swift's death, Harte said to him, he thought it a fortunate circumstance for their friendship, that they had lived so distant from each other. Pope resented the reflection, but yet, said Harte, I am convinced it was true. —WARTON.

Digitized by Google

But still the worst with most regret commend,
For each ill author is as bad a friend.[1]
To what base ends, and by what abject ways,
Are mortals urged through sacred lust of praise![2]
Ah ne'er so dire a thirst of glory boast,[3]
Nor in the critic let the man be lost.
Good-nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive, divine.
But if in noble minds some dregs remain
Not yet purged off, of spleen and sour disdain;
Discharge that rage on more provoking crimes,
Nor fear a dearth in these flagitious times.
No pardon vile obscenity should find,[4]
Though wit and art conspire to move your mind;[5]
But dulness with obscenity must prove
As shameful sure as impotence in love.
In the fat age of pleasure, wealth, and ease,
Sprung the rank weed,[6] and thrived with large increase:

[1] That is, all the unsuccessful authors maligned the successful. The unsuccessful writers never said anything more slanderous.

[2] Boileau's Art of Poetry, translated by Soame and Dryden:

Never debase yourself by treach'rous ways
Nor by such abject methods seek for praise.

Pope's own life is the strongest example upon record of the degradation he deplores.

[3] In the margin of the manuscript Pope has written the passages of Virgil from which he took his expressions. Æn. iii. 56:

quid non mortalia pectora cogis
Auri sacra fames?

Geor. i. 37:

Nec tibi regnandi veniat tam dira cupido,

which Dryden translates,

Nor let so dire a thirst of empire move.

[4] Such a manly and ingenuous censure from a culprit in this way, as in the case of Pope, is entitled to great praise.—WAKEFIELD.

If his indecorums had been the failing of youth and thoughtlessness, and he had publicly recanted his errors, his self-condemnation would be meritorious. The larger portion of his offences were, on the contrary, committed after he had declared indecency to be unpardonable. Any man, however persistently reprobate, might earn "great praise" on terms like these.

[5] No one has expressed himself upon this subject so pithily as Cowley:

'tis just
The author blush, there where the reader must.

[6] Hamlet:

And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed.—BOWLES.

Digitized by Google

When love was all an easy monarch's care;
Seldom at council, never in a war:
Jilts ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ:
Nay, wits had pensions,[1] and young lords had wit:[2]
The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,
And not a mask[3] went unimproved away:
The modest fan was lifted up no more,[4]
And virgins smiled at what they blushed before.
The following licence of a foreign reign
Did all the dregs of bold Socinus drain;[5]

[1] Wits, says he, in Charles the Second's reign had pensions, when all the world knows that it was one of the faults of that reign that none of the politer arts were then encouraged. Butler was starved at the same time that the king had his book in his pocket. Another great wit [Wycherley] lay seven years in prison for an inconsiderable debt, and Otway dared not to show his head for fear of the same fate.—DENNIS.

[2] "The young lords who had wit in the court of Charles II. were," says Dennis, "Villiers Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Sheffield Duke of Buckingham, Lord Buckhurst afterwards Earl of Dorset, the Marquess of Halifax, the Earl of Rochester, Lord Vaughan, and several others." The jilts who ruled the state were the mistresses of the king. The Duke of Buckingham and his Rehearsal are chiefly aimed at in the expression "statesmen farces writ."—CROKER.

[3] Pepys, under the date of June 12, 1663, notices that wearing masks at the theatre had "of late become a great fashion among the ladies." Cibber states that the immorality of the plays was the cause of the usage. When he wrote in 1739 the custom had been abolished for many years in consequence of the ill effects which attended it.

[4] He must mean in everyday life. There was no use for the "modest fan" at the theatre after the ladies had adopted the more effectual plan of wearing masks. Pope, ver. 535, ascribes the introduction of "obscenity" to the Restoration. In the theatre the grossness was a legacy from the older drama, and particularly from the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, which were the most popular pieces on the stage.

[5] The author has omitted two lines which stood here as containing a national reflection, which in his stricter judgment he could not but disapprove, on any people whatever.—POPE.

The cancelled couplet was as follows:

Then first the Belgian morals were extolled,
We their religion had, and they our gold.

This sneer was dictated by the poet's dislike to William III. and the Dutch, for displacing the popish king James II.—CROKER.

This ingenious and religious author seems to have had two particular antipathies—one to grammatical and verbal criticism, the other to false doctrine and heresy. To the first we may ascribe his treating Bentley, Burman, Kuster, and Wasse with a contempt which recoiled upon himself. To the second we will impute

Digitized by Google

Then unbelieving priests reformed the nation,[1]
And taught more pleasant methods of salvation;[2]
Where heaven's free subjects might their rights dispute,
Lest God himself should seem too absolute:
Pulpits their sacred satire learned to spare,
And vice admired to find a flatt'rer there![3]
Encouraged thus, wit's Titans braved the skies,
And the press groaned with licensed blasphemies.
These monsters, critics! with your darts engage,
Here point your thunder, and exhaust your rage!
Yet shun their fault, who, scandalously nice,
Will needs mistake an author into vice;
All seems infected that th' infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.[4]

III.

LEARN then what morals critics ought to show,
For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.

his pious zeal against those divines of king William, whom he supposed to be infected with the infidel, or the socinian, or the latitudinarian spirit, and not so orthodox as himself, and his friends Swift, Bolingbroke, etc. Thus he laid about him, and censured men of whose literary, or of whose theological merits or defects, he was no more a judge than his footman John Searle.—DR. JORTIN.

[1] Jortin asserted that by the "unbelieving priests" Pope alluded to Burnet. If Jortin is right, the passage was not satire but falsehood. That there was, however, much infidelity and socinianism during the reign of William III. is proved by an address of the House of Commons to the king, quoted by Bowles, "beseeching his majesty to give effectual orders for suppressing all pernicious books and pamphlets which contained impious doctrines against the Holy Trinity, and other fundamental articles of the protestant faith, tending to the subversion of the christian religion." This address was presented in February 1698.

[2] In this line he had Kennet in view, who was accused of having said, in a funeral sermon on some nobleman, that converted sinners, if they were men of parts, repented more speedily and effectually than dull rascals.—JORTIN.

[3] The published sermons of the reign of William III. do not answer to this description, which is certainly a calumny.

[4] So Lucretius, iv. 333:

Lurida preterea fiunt quæcunque tuentur
Arquati.

Besides, whatever jaundice-eyes do view,
Looks pale as well as those, and yellow too.—Creech.

Digitized by Google

'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candour shine,
That not alone what to your sense is due
All may allow, but seek your friendship too.
Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:[1]
Some positive, persisting fops we know,
Who, if once wrong, will needs be always so;
But you with pleasure own your errors past,
And make each day a critique on the last.
'Tis not enough your counsel still be true;
Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do;
Men must be taught as if you taught them not,
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.
Without good-breeding truth is disapproved;
That only makes superior sense beloved.
Be niggards of advice on no pretence:
For the worst avarice is that of sense.

This notion of the transfusion of the colour to the object from a jaundiced eye, though current in all our authors, is, I believe, a mere vulgar error.—WAKEFIELD.

It is still a disputed point whether jaundice ever affects the eye in a degree to permit only the passage of the yellow rays. The instances are at least very rare; but popular belief is a sufficient ground for a poetical comparison. Pope had just exemplified his simile; for everything looked yellow to him in the reign of William III.

[1] In the first edition,

Speak when you're sure, yet speak with diffidence.

Dennis objected that a man when sure should speak "with a modest assurance," and Pope wrote on the margin of the manuscript, "Dennis, p. 21. Alter the inconsistency." Pope's maxim was commended by Franklin. He found that his overbearing, dictatorial manner roused needless opposition, and he resolved never "to use a word that imported a fixed opinion," but he employed instead the qualifying phrases, "I conceive," "I imagine," or "it so appears to me at present." "To this," he says, "after my character of integrity, I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow citizens when I proposed new institutions or alterations in the old; for I was but a bad speaker, subject to much hesitation, and yet I generally carried my point." He admits that his humility was feigned. Had it been real there would have been no need for "I conceive," "I imagine," which are implied without a tiresome, superfluous repetition. Unless the dogmatism is in the mind opinions have not the tone of decrees.

Digitized by Google

With mean complaisance ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.[1]
Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof, who merit praise.
'Twere well might critics still this freedom take,
But Appius reddens[2] at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threat'ning eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.[3]

[1] Warton praises Pope for practising the precept in correcting the poems of Wycherley, and condemned Wycherley for ungenerously resenting the candour of his critic. Bowles extenuates the conduct of Wycherley, and says that "the superannuated bard" bore the corrections with "great temper till Pope seriously advised him to turn the whole into prose." Warton and Bowles were deceived by the printed correspondence of Pope and Wycherley, and were not aware that the letters were garbled in the very particulars which relate to the cause of the quarrel,—a quarrel so discreditable to Pope that he had recourse to forgery to shield himself and throw the blame upon Wycherley. It is certain that "the superannuated bard" did not take offence at the advice to turn his works into prose, and there is no reason to doubt the contemporaneous report that his anger arose from discovering that Pope, while professing unlimited friendship, had made him the subject of some satirical verses.

[2] This picture was taken to himself by John Dennis, a furious old critic by profession, who, upon no other provocation, wrote against this Essay and its author in a manner perfectly lunatic: for, as to the mention made of him in ver. 270, he took it as a compliment, and said it was treacherously meant to cause him to overlook this abuse of his person.—POPE.

Pope's acrimonious note on his early antagonist first appeared in the edition of 1743, when Dennis had been some years dead. "His book against me," the poet wrote to Caryll, Nov. 19, 1712, "made me very heartily merry in two minutes' time," and here we find him still smarting with resentment after thirty years and upwards had gone by, and his enemy was in the grave. The original reading in the manuscript of ver. 585 was "But D—— reddens." The substituted name is taken from Dennis's tragedy of "Appius and Virginia," which appeared in 1709. The stare was one of his characteristics. "He starts, stares, and looks round him at every jerk of his person forward," says Sir Richard Steele, when describing his walk. The "tremendous" was not only a sarcasm on his appearance, but on his partiality for the epithet, which was an old topic of ridicule. "If," said Gildon, in 1702, "there is anything of tragedy in the piece, it lies in the word 'tremendous,' for he is so fond of it he had rather use it in every page than slay his beloved Iphigenia." Gay, in 1712, jeeringly dedicated his Mohocks to Mr. D[ennis], and assigned, among the reasons for the selection, that his theme was "horrid and tremendous."

[3] This thought occurs also in Donne's fourth Satire, which our poet has modernised:

And though his face be as ill
As theirs, which in old hangings whip Christ, still
He strives to look worse.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Fear most to tax an Honourable fool,
Whose right it is, uncensured, to be dull;
Such, without wit, are poets when they please,
As without learning they can take degrees.[1]
Leave dang'rous truths to unsuccessful satires,
And flattery to fulsome dedicators,
Whom, when they praise, the world believes no more,
Than when they promise to give scribbling o'er.
'Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain,
And charitably let the dull be vain:[2]
Your silence there is better than your spite,
For who can rail so long as they can write?[3]
Still humming on, their drowsy course they keep,
And lashed so long, like tops, are lashed asleep.[4]
False steps but help them to renew the race,
As, after stumbling, jades will mend their pace.
What crowds of these, impenitently bold,
In sounds and jingling syllables grown old,
Still run on poets in a raging vein,
Ev'n to the dregs and squeezing of the brain,
Strain out the last dull droppings[5] of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence.

[1] It may not be known to every reader that noblemen and the sons of noblemen are admitted of course at our universities to the degree of M.A., after keeping the terms of two years.—WAKEFIELD.

The privilege is now abolished.

[2] If Cibber was the dull fellow Pope would have had him thought, no conduct could have been more proper towards him than that which Pope here recommends. Pope seems to have anticipated Colley's subsequent resolution "to write as long" as Pope "could rail."—BOWLES.

[3] Duke of Buckingham's Essay on Satire,

But who can rail so long as he can sleep?

[4] Pope may have derived this comparison from the "Epilogue, written by a person of honour," to Dryden's Secret Love:

But t'other day I heard this rhyming fop
Say critics were the whips, and he the top:
For as a top spins best the more you baste her,
So ev'ry lash you give, he writes the faster,

The author of the Epilogue was more exact than Pope, whose application of the simile is inaccurate, for the top is in full spin when it is popularly said to be asleep.

[5] Dryden's Aurengzebe:

The dregs and droppings of enervate love
—STEEVENS.

Digitized by Google

Such shameless bards we have; and yet, 'tis true,
There are as mad, abandoned critics too.
The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head,[1]
With his own tongue still edifies his ears,
And always list'ning to himself appears.
All books he reads, and all he reads assails,
From Dryden's Fables down to Durfey's Tales.
With him most authors steal their works, or buy;
Garth did not write his own Dispensary.[2]
Name a new play, and he's the poet's friend,
Nay, showed his faults—but when would poets mend?

It has been suggested that he alludes to Wycherley.—WARTON.

Whom else could the lines suit at that period, when Pope says, "Such bards we *have*?" If Wycherley was intended, what must we think of Pope, who could wound, in this manner, his old friend, for whom he professed so much kindness, and who first introduced him to notice and patronage.—BOWLES.

The application was too obvious for Pope to have ventured on the lines unless he had designed to expose his former ally. The original reading of ver. 610 in the manuscript was,

> But if incorrigible bards we view,
> Know there are mad, &c.

And the alteration turned an unappropriated description into a particular censure on living men. Wycherley would be the last person to detect the likeness, and relaxing, some months after the Essay appeared, in his indignation against Pope, "he praised the poem," according to a letter of Cromwell, dated Oct. 26, 1711, but which rests on the authority of Pope alone.

[1] In allusion to this class of pedants Gray said, "Learning never should be encouraged; it only draws out fools from their obscurity."

[2] A common slander at that time in prejudice of that deserving author. Our poet did him this justice, when that slander most prevailed; and it is now (perhaps the sooner for this very verse) dead and forgotten.—POPE.

The accusation from which he defended Garth was brought against Pope himself. "This poem," says Johnson, of Cooper's Hill, "had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread that the performance was not Denham's own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his Cato and Pope of his Essay on Criticism." The story told was that Wycherley sent the Essay to Pope for his revision, and that Pope published it as his own. Authors are not the only persons who are exposed to such calumnies. The victories of a great general are almost invariably imputed to some subordinate officer, and it was long a favourite theory of the malignant that Napoleon owed his successes to Berthier, and the Duke of Wellington to Sir George Murray.

Digitized by Google

No place so sacred from such fops is barred,[1]
Nor is Paul's church[2] more safe than Paul's churchyard:[3]
Nay, fly to altars; there they'll talk you dead;
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.[4]
Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks,
It still looks home, and short excursions makes;[5]
But rattling nonsense in full volleys breaks,
And never shocked, and never turned aside,
Bursts out, resistless, with a thund'ring tide.

But where's the man, who counsel can bestow,
Still pleased to teach, and yet not proud to know?
Unbiassed, or by favour, or by spite;
Not dully prepossessed, nor blindly right;
Though learn'd, well-bred; and though well-bred, sincere;
Modestly bold, and humanly[6] severe;

[1] There is an ellipse of "that" after "sacred," and of "it" after "fops," or the line is not English, and when the omitted words are supplied the inversion is intolerable.

[2] The propriety of the specification in this proverbial remark is founded on a circumstance no longer existing in our poet's time, and derived, therefore, by him from older writers. "In the reigns of James I. and Charles I.," says Pennant, "the body of St. Paul's cathedral was the common resort of the politicians, the newsmongers, and the idle in general. It was called Paul's Walk, and the frequenters known by the name of Paul's walkers."—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Between this and ver. 624—

In vain you shrug and sweat and strive to fly:
These know no manners but in poetry.
They'll stop a hungry chaplain in his grace,
To treat of unities of time and place.—
POPE.

[4] This stroke of satire is literally taken from Boileau:

Gardez-vous d'imiter ce rimeur furieux,
Qui, de ses vains écrits, lecteur harmonieux,
Aborde en récitant quiconque le salue,
Et poursuit de ses vers les passants dans la rue.
Il n'est temple si saint, des anges respecté,
Qui soit contre sa muse un lieu de sûreté.

Which lines allude to the impertinence of a French poet called Du Perrier, who finding Boileau one day at church, insisted upon repeating to him an ode during the elevation of the host.—WARTON.

Boileau tells the incident of an individual poetaster. Pope generalises the exceptional trait, and represents it to have been the usual practice of foppish critics to talk criticism at the altar. The probability is that he had never known an instance. The line "For fools rush in," is certainly fashioned, says Bishop Hurd, on Shakespeare, Richard iii. Act 1, Sc. 3:

Wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.

[5] Virgil, Geo. iv. 194:

Excursusque breves tentant.
Nor forage far, but short excursions make.
Dryden.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] "Humanly" is improperly put

Digitized by Google

Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
And gladly praise the merit of a foe?
Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfined;
A knowledge both of books and human kind;
Gen'rous converse; a soul exempt from pride;
And love to praise,[1] with reason on his side?
Such once were critics; such the happy few,
Athens and Rome in better ages knew.[2]
The mighty Stagyrite first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore;[3]
He steered securely, and discovered far,[4]
Led by the light of the Mæonian star.[5]
Poets, a race long unconfined, and free,
Still fond and proud of savage liberty,
Received his laws;[6] and stood convinced 'twas fit,
Who conquered nature, should preside o'er wit.[7]

for humanely. The only authorised sense of the former is belonging to man; of the latter, kindly, compassionately.—Dr. George Campbell.

[1] "Love to praise" means "a love of bestowing praise," but, as Wakefield says, it is an "obscure expression, and repugnant to usage."

[2] This is followed by two additional lines in the manuscript:

Such did of old poetic laws impart,
And what till then was fury turned to art.

[3] Between ver. 646 and 647, I have found the following lines, since suppressed by the author:

That bold Columbus of the realms of wit,
Whose first discovery's not exceeded yet.
Led by the light of the Mæonian star,
He steered securely, and discovered far.
He, when all nature was subdued before,
Like his great pupil, sighed and longed for more;
Fancy's wild regions yet unvanquished lay,
A boundless empire, and that owned no sway.
Poets, &c.—Warburton.

[4] Dr. Knightly Chetwood to Lord Roscommon:

Hoist sail, bold writers! search, discover far;
You have a compass for a polar star.—Wakefield.

[5] After ver. 648, in the first edition, came this couplet:

Not only nature did his laws obey,
But fancy's boundless empire owned his sway.

Dennis denied that nature obeyed the laws of Aristotle. "The laws of nature," he said, "are unalterable but by God himself." Pope's language is inaccurate.

[6] The obvious interpretation of this passage would be that poets, Homer excepted, indulged in "savage liberty" till they were restrained by the laws of Aristotle, which is inconsistent with ver. 92—99, where Pope says that the Greek critics framed their laws from the practice of the poets.

[7] He presided over wit by his Rhetoric and Poetics, and gave proofs by his Physics that he had "conquered nature." Pope's panegyric on the dominion exercised by Aristotle is far inferior to Dryden's celebration of the deliverance from it.

Digitized by Google

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,[1]
And without method talks us into sense;
Will, like a friend, familiarly convey
The truest notions in the easiest way.
He, who supreme in judgment, as in wit,
Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ,
Yet judged with coolness,[2] though he sung with fire;
His precepts teach but what his works inspire.
Our critics take a contrary extreme,
They judge with fury, but they write with phlegm:[3]
Nor suffers Horace more in wrong translations
By wits, than critics in as wrong quotations.[4]
See Dionysius[5] Homer's thoughts refine,
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line!

The longest tyranny that ever swayed
Was that wherein our ancestors betrayed
Their free-born reason to the Stagyrite,
And made his torch their universal light.
Had we still paid that homage to a name,
Which only God and nature justly claim,
The western seas had been our utmost bound, [drowned,
Where poets still might dream the sun was
And all the stars that shine in southern skies
Had been admired by none but savage eyes.

[1] Oldham—

Each strain a graceful negligence does wear.
—WAKEFIELD.

[2] "Before he goes ten lines further," said Dennis, "he forgets himself, and commends Longinus for the very contrary quality for which he commended Horace. He commends Horace for judging coolly in verse, and extols Longinus for criticising with fire in prose." With very little faith in the traits he had ascribed to Horace, Pope was tempted in the manuscript to reverse the characteristic, and write

He judged with spirit as he sung with fire.

He subsequently affixed to the original reading the note, "Not to be altered. Horace judged with coolness as Longinus with fire."

[3] Dennis notices that this couplet is borrowed from Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse:

Thus make the proper use of each extreme,
And write with fury, but correct with phlegm.

[4] In all Pope's works there cannot be found a couplet so paltry and impertinent as this.—WAKEFIELD.

The construction of the last line is deplorably faulty. "Horace does not suffer more by wits than he suffers by critics" is Pope's meaning, but interpreted by his language, he would be read as asserting that Horace did not suffer more by wrong translations than critics suffered by wrong quotations.

[5] Dionysius of Halicarnassus.—POPE.

These prosaic lines, this spiritless eulogy, are much below the merit of the critic whom they are intended to celebrate.—WARTON.

A most meagre account of a very excellent and judicious critic. But what can we expect when men overstep the limit of their enquiries, and rush in where learning has not authorised them to tread.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,
The scholar's learning, with the courtier's ease.[1]
In grave Quintilian's[2] copious work, we find
The justest rules, and clearest method joined:
Thus useful arms in magazines we place,
All ranged in order, and disposed with grace,
But less to please the eye, than arm the hand,
Still fit for use, and ready at command.[3]
Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,[4]
And bless their critic with a poet's fire.
An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just:

The lines first appeared in the second edition. In a pretended letter to Addison, dated October 10, 1714, Pope speaks of having found a particular remark in one of the treatises of the Greek critic, but he had probably never looked into the original when this couplet was written, and seems to have falsely inferred from chance quotations that the comments upon Homer were the special characteristic of the works of Dionysius. Pope was indebted for the leading phrase in his couplet to a passage of Rochester, quoted by Wakefield:

Compare each phrase, examine ev'ry line,
Weigh ev'ry word, and ev'ry thought refine.

[1] This dissolute and effeminate writer little deserved a place among good critics for only two or three pages on the subject of criticism.—WARTON.

It is to be suspected that Pope had never read Petronius, and mentioned him on the credit of two or three sentences which he had often seen quoted, imagining that where there was so much, there must necessarily be more. Young men, in haste to be renowned, too frequently talk of books which they have scarcely seen. —JOHNSON.

If Pope had been acquainted with the general tenor of the fragments which remain of Petronius, he would not have celebrated the most corrupt and disgusting writer of antiquity for an unalloyed combination of charming qualities.

[2] To commend Quintilian barely for his method, and to insist merely on this excellence, is below the merit of one of the most rational and elegant of Roman writers. Considering the nature of Quintilian's subject, he afforded copious matter for a more appropriate and poetical character. No author ever adorned a scientifical treatise with so many beautiful metaphors.—WARTON.

[3] In the early editions,

Nor thus alone the curious eye to please,
But to be found, when need requires, with ease.

[4] The Muses sure Longinus did inspire.—POPE.

The taste and sensibility of Longinus were exquisite; but his observations are too general, and his method too loose. The precision of the true philosophical critic is lost in the declamation of the florid rhetorician. Instead of showing for what reason a sentiment or image is sublime, and discovering the secret power by which

Digitized by Google

Whose own example strengthens all his laws;
And is himself that great sublime he draws.[1]
Thus long succeeding critics justly reigned,
Licence repressed, and useful laws ordained.
Learning and Rome alike in empire grew;
And arts still followed where her eagles flew;
From the same foes, at last, both felt[2] their doom,
And the same age saw learning fall and Rome.[3]
With tyranny, then superstition joined,
As that the body, this enslaved the mind;[4]
Much was believed, but little understood,[5]
And to be dull was construed to be good;[6]

they affect a reader with pleasure, he is ever intent on producing something sublime himself, and strokes of his own eloquence.—WARTON.

[1] This verse is ungrammatical. With respect to the thought, Boileau, whose translation of Longinus our poet had most probably read, has said, in his preface to that work, exactly the same thing: "Souvent il fait la figure qu'il enseigne; et, en parlant du sublime, il est lui-même très-sublime." Pope's couplet seems indebted also to the Prologue of Dryden's Tempest, speaking of Shakespeare:

He, monarch-like, gave those his subjects law;
And is that nature, which they paint and draw.—WAKEFIELD.

Wakefield calls ver. 680 "ungrammatical," because, literally construed, it reads, "And whose own example is himself, etc."

[2] "Felt" is a flat, insipid word in this place.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] "Rome," as invariably pronounced by Pope's contemporaries had the same sound with "doom," and the pronunciation is not quite obsolete in our own time among persons who were born in the last century. In the previous part of the poem he had made Rome rhyme to "dome," which itself was often pronounced like "doom."

[4] "The superstition of some ages after the subversion of the Roman Empire," wrote Pope to Caryll, July 19, 1711, "is too manifest a truth to be denied, and does in no sort reflect upon the present catholics, who are free from it. Our silence on these points may, with some reason, make our adversaries think we allow and persist in those bigotries, which in reality all good and sensible men despise, though they are persuaded not to speak against them." Most of Pope's associates were men of letters or men of the world, and he could know little of the spirit of the church to which he nominally belonged, when he was simple enough to believe that the Romanists of his day would sanction a sweeping denunciation of the ignorance and superstition of the monks.

[5] All was believed, but nothing understood. —POPE.

[6] Between ver. 690 and 691, the author omitted these two:

Vain wits and critics were no more allowed,
When none but saints had licence to be proud.—POPE.

Digitized by Google

A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
And the monks finished what the Goths begun.[1]
At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
(The glory of the priesthood and the shame!)[2]
Stemmed the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,[3]
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.
But see! each muse, in Leo's golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her withered bays,
Rome's ancient genius, o'er its ruins spread,[4]
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head.
Then sculpture and her sister-arts revive;
Stones leaped to form, and rocks began to live;[5]

[1] Here he forms the tenses wrong. —WAKEFIELD.

Pope told Caryll that he did not speak in this couplet "of learning in general, but of polite learning,—criticism, poetry, etc.—which was the only learning concerned in the subject of the Essay." He at the same time confessed his belief that the learning which the monks possessed "was barely kept alive by them." The explanation would not contribute to conciliate the offended catholics.

[2] The "glory" from his own greatness, the "shame" from the rancour with which some of his brother priests assailed him.—CROKER.

Oldham in his Satire:

On Butler, who can think without just rage,
The glory and the scandal of the age.—
WAKEFIELD.

Pope avowed his conviction to Caryll that the priests had openly accused him of heterodoxy in other passages of his poem, because they were secretly exasperated at his eulogy upon Erasmus. "What in their own opinion," he said, "they are really angry at is that a man whom their tribe oppressed and persecuted should be vindicated after a whole age of obloquy by one of their own people, who is free and bold enough to utter a generous truth in behalf of the dead, whom no man sure will flatter, and few do justice to."

[3] If the restoration of learning consisted in recovering the works and reviving the spirit of the ancients, it had been in a great degree accomplished before the time of Erasmus.—ROSCOE.

[4] Genius is here personified, and this person is said by Pope to have been "spread over the ruins of Rome." The poet has evidently mixed up genius considered as a quality of the remains of antiquity with genius considered as a presiding being.

[5] For the expression in the last half of this verse, Wakefield quotes Addison on sculpture in the letter from Italy,

Or teach their animated rocks to live.

And for the expression in the first half, he quotes Dryden's Religio Laici:

Or various atoms, interfering dance,
Leaped into form.

Wakefield ascribes the origin of the phrase to the fable that the stones of Thebes moved into their places at the music of Amphion, and it is thus

Digitized by Google

With sweeter notes each rising temple rung;[1]
A Raphael painted, and a Vida sung.[2]
Immortal Vida: on whose honoured brow
The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow:[3]
Cremona now shall ever boast thy name,
As next in place to Mantua, next in fame![4]
But soon by impious arms from Latium chased,
Their ancient bounds the banished Muses passed.[5]
Thence arts o'er all the northern world advance,
But critic-learning flourished most in France;
The rules a nation, born to serve,[6] obeys;
And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.[7]

used by Waller in his poem upon his Majesty's Repairing of St. Paul's:

He like Amphion makes those quarries leap
Into fair figures from a confused heap.

[1] Leo was not only an admirer of music, but a skilful performer, and we are informed by Pietro Aaron that "though he had acquired a consummate knowledge in most arts and sciences, he seemed to love, encourage, and exalt music more than any other." To sacred music he paid a more particular attention, and sought throughout Europe for the most celebrated performers, both vocal and instrumental.—ROSCOE.

[2] M. Hieronymus Vida, an excellent Latin poet, who writ an Art of Poetry in verse. He flourished in the time of Leo X.—POPE.

But Vida was by no means the most celebrated poet that adorned the age of Leo X. His merits seem not to have been particularly attended to in England till Pope had bestowed this commendation upon him, although the Poetics had been correctly published at Oxford by Basil Kennet some time before. They are perhaps the most perfect of his compositions; they are excellently translated by Pitt.—WARTON.

[3] "The ancients," says the writer of the Supplement to the Profound, "always gave ivy to the poets, as may appear from numberless places in the classics, nor was it ever applied to patrons or critics, in contradistinction to poets, by any but this ingenious author."

[4] Alluding to

"Mantua, væ miseræ, nimium vicina Cremonæ." Virg.—WARBURTON.

This application is made in Kennet's edition of Vida.—WARTON.

To say that the birth-place of Vida would be next in fame to the birth-place of Virgil was to rank him before all the other poets that Italy had produced—before Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto. The antithesis is marred by its want of truth.

[5] This, Warburton says, refers to the sack of Rome by the Duke of Bourbon, which Pope assumed had driven poetry out of Italy. The assigned cause is inadequate to account for the effect.

[6] The "born to serve" is a sarcasm on the readiness with which the French submitted to the despotism of Louis XIV.

[7] May I be pardoned for declaring it as my opinion, that Boileau's is

Digitized by Google

But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,
And kept unconquered, and uncivilized;
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defied the Romans, as of old.[1]
Yet some there were, among the sounder few
Of those who less presumed, and better knew,
Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,
And here restored wit's fundamental laws.
Such was the Muse, whose rules and practice tell
"Nature's chief master-piece is writing well."[2]

the best Art of Poetry extant? The brevity of his precepts, the justness of his metaphors, the harmony of his numbers, as far as Alexandrine lines will admit, the exactness of his method, the perspicacity of his remarks, and the energy of his style, all duly considered, may render this opinion not unreasonable. It is scarcely to be conceived, how much is comprehended in four short cantos. He that has well digested these, cannot be said to be ignorant of any important rule of poetry.—WARTON.

Boileau is said by Pope to sway in right of Horace because the Frenchman avowed that he based his Art of Poetry on that of the Roman. The English poet has been indebted to both.

[1] The comparison fails. The Romans of old subdued the Britons, and ruled over them for centuries.

[2] Essay on Poetry, by the Duke of Buckingham. Our poet is not the only one of his time who complimented this Essay and its noble author. Mr. Dryden had done it very largely in the Dedication to his Translation of the Æneid; and Dr. Garth, in the first edition of his Dispensary, says:

The Tyber now no courtly Gallus sees,
But smiling Thames enjoys his Normanbys;

though afterwards omitted, when parties were carried so high in the reign of Queen Anne, as to allow no commendation to an opposite in politics. The duke was all his life a steady adherent to the church of England party, yet an enemy to the extravagant measures of the court in the reign of Charles II. On which account, after having strongly patronized Mr. Dryden, a coolness succeeded between them on that poet's absolute attachment to the court, which carried him some length beyond what the duke could approve of. This nobleman's true character had been very well marked by Mr. Dryden before:

The muse's friend,
Himself a muse. In Sanadrin's debate
True to his prince, but not a slave of state.
Abs. and Achit.

Our author was more happy; he was honoured very young with his friendship, and it continued till his death in all the circumstances of a familiar esteem.—POPE.

The Duke of Buckingham, in his Essay, has followed the method of Boileau, in discoursing on the various species of poetry in their different gradations, to no other purpose than to manifest his own inferiority. His reputation was owing to his rank. In reading his poems one is apt to exclaim with our author, "What

Digitized by Google

Such was Roscommon, not more learn'd than good,[1]
With manners gen'rous as his noble blood;
To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,
And ev'ry author's merit, but his own.[2]
Such late was Walsh,[3] the muse's judge and friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend:
To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.
This humble praise, lamented shade! receive,
This praise at least a grateful muse may give:
The muse, whose early voice you taught to sing,
Prescribed her heights, and pruned her tender wing,

woeful stuff this madrigal would be," &c.—WARTON.

Pope must have been well aware that, amongst all the poetic triflers of the day, there was not one more ripe for the Dunciad. The fact, I fear, is that Pope admired him, in spite of his verses, as a man rich and prosperous.—DE QUINCEY.

The couplet in which the duke is mentioned was first inserted in the quarto of 1717, and the note on him in the edition of 1743. In the original manuscript Pope had made the same character serve for him and Lord Roscommon:

Such learn'd and modest, not more great than good,
With manners gen'rous as his noble blood,
E'er saints impatient snatched him to the sky,
Roscommon was, and such is Normanby.

[1] An Essay on translated Verse seems, at first sight, to be a barren subject; yet Roscommon has decorated it with many precepts of utility and taste. It is indisputably better written, in a closer and more vigorous style, than the last-mentioned essay.—WARTON.

When Warton wrote, some traditional reputation still lingered round the poems of Roscommon. His feeble platitudes are now forgotten.

[2] Rochester's Poems:

to her was known
Every one's fault or merit but her own.
—CUNNINGHAM.

[3] Walsh was in general a flimsy and frigid writer. The Rambler calls his works pages of inanity. His three letters to Pope, however, are well written. His remarks on the nature of pastoral poetry, on borrowing from the ancients, and against florid conceits, are worthy perusal.—WARTON.

In the manuscript, the eulogy on Walsh was at first somewhat different:

Such late was Walsh—nor can'st thou, Muse, offend, [friend;
Next these to name the Muse's judge and
Who free from envious censure, partial praise,
Showed ancient candour in malicious days
To frailties mild, &c.

The Muse did offend notwithstanding. After speaking of the irritation he excited by his commendations of Erasmus, Pope thus continued in his letter to Caryll of July 19, 1711:—"Others, you know, were as angry that I mentioned Mr. Walsh with honour, who as he never refused to any one of merit of any party the praise due to him, so honestly deserved it from all others of never so different interests or sentiments." The objections seem to have come

Digitized by Google

(Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
But in low numbers short excursions tries;[1]
Content, if hence th' unlearn'd their wants may view,
The learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame;[2]
Averse alike to flatter, or offend;
Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.[3]

from the Roman Catholics, and to have been made on religious or political grounds, from which it may be inferred that Walsh was an active opponent of the exiled family. Neither the laudation of Dryden, who said he was "the best critic of our nation," nor the poetical tribute of Pope, could do more than preserve the bare name of an author whose literary qualifications were of the most trivial kind. Dennis, who was acquainted with him, and who admits that he was an indifferent poet, adds that "he was learned, candid and judicious, and a man of a very good understanding in spite of his being a beau." He was a country gentlemen of fortune, and a member of parliament, which were the principal circumstances that conferred lustre upon his small talents in the eyes of the wits.

[1] Pope fell into the prevalent vice of uttering extravagant, insincere compliments; for it is impossible to believe that he "no more attempted to rise" in verse because he had lost the guidance of Walsh. The guide had not done much towards directing Pope's flight, and "teaching him to sing." The Pastorals were his only work, antecedent to the Essay on Criticism, which had a nominal originality, and three of these Pastorals were written before he and Walsh were acquainted.

[2] The hint for the first verse in this couplet seems to have been supplied by Dryden's conclusion of the Religio Laici:

Yet neither praise expect, nor censure fear.

The second verse of the couplet seems to be an adaptation of a line in Prior's Henry and Emma:

Joyful to live yet not afraid to die.

[3] These concluding lines bear a great resemblance to Boileau's conclusion of his Art of Poetry, but are perhaps superior:

Censeur un peu fâcheux, mais souvent nécessaire;
Plus enclin à blâmer, que savant à bien faire.—WARTON.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

Dr. Warburton, endeavouring to demonstrate, what Addison could not discover, nor what Pope himself, according to the testimony of his intimate friend, Richardson, ever thought of or intended, that this Essay was written with a methodical and systematical regularity, has accompanied the whole with a long and laboured commentary, in which he has tortured many passages to support this groundless opinion. Warburton had certainly wit, genius, and much miscellaneous learning; but was perpetually dazzled and misled, by the eager desire of seeing everything in a new light unobserved before, into perverse interpretations and forced comments. It is painful to see such abilities wasted on such unsubstantial objects. Accordingly his notes on Shakspeare have been totally demolished by Edwards and Malone; and Gibbon has torn up by the roots his fanciful and visionary interpretation of the sixth book of Virgil. And but few readers, I believe, will be found that will cordially subscribe to an opinion lately delivered,* that his notes on Pope's Works are the very best ever given on any classic whatever. For, to instance no other, surely the attempt to reconcile the doctrines of the Essay on Man to the doctrines of revelation, is the rashest adventure in which ever critic yet engaged. This is, in truth, to divine, rather than to explain an author's meaning.—Warton.

If this Commentary were only a perverse and forced interpretation, as Warton insinuates, it is scarcely likely that Pope would have approved of it so highly, as not only to speak of it in the warmest terms of admiration, but to allow it to accompany his own edition of the poem. To assert that Pope was not the best judge of his own meaning, is an insult not only to his understanding, but to common sense; and to discard the commentary of Warburton, as Warton has done in his edition, in order to replace it by a series of notes, intended to impress the reader with his own opinions, is a kind of infringement on those rights, which had already been decided on by the only person who was entitled to judge on the subject. For these reasons I have

* By Bishop Hurd.

Digitized by Google

thought it advisable, in this edition, to restore the commentary of Warburton entire, which has only been partially done by Mr. Bowles; conceiving that it is as injurious, if not more so, to the commentator, whose object it is to demonstrate the order and consistency of the poem, to deprive him of a portion of his remarks, as it is to deprive him of them altogether.—Roscoe.

Warburton's commentary proceeded upon two assumptions, which are not complimentary to Pope. The first was that a poem which had contracted no obscurity from age, and which consisted of a series of simple precepts, was written in a manner so confused that it would not be intelligible to ordinary readers, unless the whole was retold in cumbrous prose. The second assumption was that Pope was so deficient in power of expression that his ideas were constantly at variance with his words. One of the sarcastic canons of criticism which Edwards deduced from Warburton's Shakspeare was that an editor "may interpret his author so as to make him mean directly contrary to what he says," and certain it is that if Warburton's explanations are correct, Pope's language was often sadly inaccurate. Roscoe, in effect, adopts the last solution, for he urges that Pope, who was the best judge of his own meaning, acknowledged his meaning to be that which Warburton ascribed to him. There is another, and more probable alternative. Though Pope undeniably knew his own meaning best, his vanity may have been gratified by the subtle views which were imputed to him, and he may have had the weakness, in consequence, to adopt interpretations which never crossed his mind when he composed his poem. Since, however, he desired that his works should be read by the light of Warburton's paraphrase, an editor is not warranted in overruling the decision of the author, and on this account the commentary and notes of Warburton are printed in their integrity, though in themselves they are tedious, verbose, and barren.

Digitized by Google

THE COMMENTARY AND NOTES OF W. WARBURTON ON THE ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

COMMENTARY.

An Essay.] The poem is in one book, but divided into three principal parts or members. The first, to ver. 201, gives rules for the study of the art of criticism: the second, from thence to ver. 560, exposes the causes of wrong judgment: and the third, from thence to the end, marks out the morals of the critic.

In order to a right conception of this poem, it will be necessary to observe, that though it be entitled simply An Essay on Criticism, yet several of the precepts relate equally to the good writing as well as to the true judging of a poem. This is so far from violating the unity of the subject, that it preserves and completes it: or from disordering the regularity of the form, that it adds beauty to it, as will appear by the following considerations: 1. It was impossible to give a full and exact idea of the art of poetical criticism, without considering at the same time the art of poetry; so far as poetry is an art. These therefore being closely connected in nature, the author has, with much judgment, interwoven the precepts of each reciprocally through his whole poem. 2. As the rules of the ancient critics were taken from poets who copied nature, this is another reason why every poet should be a critic: therefore as the subject is poetical criticism, it is frequently addressed to the critical poet. And 3dly, the art of criticism is as properly, and much more usefully exercised in writing than in judging.

But readers have been misled by the modesty of the title, which only promises an art of criticism, to expect little, where they will find a great deal, —a treatise, and that no incomplete one, of the art both of criticism and poetry. This, and the not attending to the considerations offered above, was what, perhaps misled a very candid writer, after having given the Essay on Criticism all the praises on the side of genius and poetry which his true taste could not refuse it, to say, that "the observations follow one another like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose writer." Spect. No. 235. I do not see how method can hurt any one grace of poetry: or what prerogative there is in verse to dispense with regularity. The remark is false in every

Digitized by Google

part of it. Mr. Pope's Essay on Criticism, the reader will soon see, is a regular piece, and a very learned critic has lately shown that Horace had the same attention to method in his Art of Poetry. See Mr. Hurd's Comment on the Epistle to the Pisos.[1]

Ver. 1. *'Tis hard to say, &c.*] The poem opens, from ver. 1 to 9, with showing the use and seasonableness of the subject. Its use, from the greater mischief in wrong criticism than in ill poetry—this only tiring, that misleading the reader. Its seasonableness, from the growing number of bad critics, which now vastly exceeds that of bad poets.

Ver. 9. *'Tis with our judgments, &c.*] The author having shown us the expediency of his subject, the art of criticism, inquires next, from ver. 8 to 15, into the proper qualities of a true critic, and observes first, that judgment alone is not sufficient to constitute this character, because judgment, like the artificial measures of time, goes different, and yet each man relies upon his own. The reasoning is conclusive, and the similitude extremely just. For judgment, when it is alone, is generally regulated, or at least much influenced, by custom, fashion, and habit; and never certain and constant but when founded upon and accompanied by taste, which is in the critic, what in the poet we call genius. Both are derived from heaven, and like the sun, the natural measure of time, always constant and equable.

Judgment alone, it is allowed, will not make a poet; where is the wonder then, that it will not make a critic in poetry? For on examination we shall find, that genius and taste are but one and the same faculty, differently exerting itself under different names, in the two professions of poetry and criticism. The art of poetry consists in selecting, out of all those images which present themselves to the fancy, such of them as are truly beautiful; and the art of criticism in discerning, and fully relishing what it finds so selected. The main difference is, that in the poet, this faculty is eminently joined to a bright imagination, and extensive comprehension, which provide stores for the selection, and can form that selection, by proportioned parts, into a regular whole: in the critic, it is joined to a solid judgment and accurate discernment, which can penetrate into the causes of an excellence, and display that excellence in all its variety of lights. Longinus had taste in an eminent degree; therefore, this quality, which all true critics have in common, our author makes his distinguishing character:

> Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
> And bless their critic with a poet's fire.

i. e. with taste, or genius.

[1] Warburton's remarks on the quotation from Addison's paper in the Spectator, originally ran thus: "Whereas nothing can be more unlike, in this respect, than these two poems—the Essay on Criticism having, as we shall show, all the regularity that method can demand, and the Art of Poetry all the looseness and inconnection that a familiar conversation would indulge. Neither, were it otherwise, would this excellent author's observation excuse our poet, who, writing in the formal way of a discourse, was obliged to observe the method of such compositions, while Horace in an easy epistle needed no apology for want of it. For it is the nature of the composition that makes method proper or unnecessary." The passage was altered out of compliment to the commentary of his friend Hurd on the Art of Poetry, and Warburton, who had previously contended that method was needless in Horace, now maintained that there was no "prerogative in verse to dispense with regularity." It was common with him to regulate his critical opinions by his personal partialities or aversions.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 15. *Let such teach others, &c.*] But it is not enough that the critic hath these natural endowments of judgment and taste, to entitle him to exercise his art; he should, as our author shows us, from ver. 14 to 19, in order to give a further test of his qualification, have put them successfully into use. And this on two accounts: 1. Because the office of a critic is an exercise of authority. 2. Because he being naturally as partial to his judgment as the poet is to his wit, his partiality would have nothing to correct it, as that of the person judged hath by the very terms. Therefore some test is necessary; and the best and most unexceptionable, is his having written well himself—an approved remedy against critical partiality, and the surest means of so maturing the judgment as to reap with glory what Longinus calls "the last and most perfect fruits of much study and experience." Η γαρ των λογων κρισις πολλης εστι πειρας τελευταιον επιγεννημα.

Ver. 19. *Yet, if we look, &c.*] But the author having been thus free with the fundamental quality of criticism, judgment, so as to charge it with inconstancy and partiality, and to be often warped by custom and affection, that he may not be misunderstood, he next explains, from ver. 18 to 36, the nature of judgment, and the accidents occasioning those miscarriages before objected to it. He owns, that the seeds of judgment are indeed sown in the minds of most men, but by ill culture, as it springs up, it generally runs wild, either on the one hand, by false learning, which pedants call philology, and by false reasoning, which philosophers call school-learning, or, on the other, by false wit, which is not regulated by sense, and by false politeness, which is solely regulated by the fashion. Both these sorts, who have their judgment thus doubly depraved, the poet observes, are naturally turned to censure and abuse, only with this difference, that the learned dunce always affects to be on the reasoning, and the unlearned fool on the laughing side. And thus, at the same time, our author proves the truth of his introductory observation, that the number of bad critics is vastly superior to that of bad poets.

Ver. 36. *Some have at first for wits, &c.*] The poet having enumerated, in this account of the nature of judgment and its various depravations, the several sorts of bad critics, and ranked them into two general classes, as the first sort,—namely, the men spoiled by false learning—are but few in comparison of the other, and likewise come less within his main view (which is poetical criticism) but keep grovelling at the bottom amongst words and syllables, he thought it enough for his purpose here, just to have mentioned them, proposing to do them right hereafter. But the men spoiled by false taste are innumerable, and these are his proper concern. He therefore, from ver. 35 to 46, subdivides them again into the two classes of the volatile and heavy. He describes, in few words, the quick progression of the one through criticism, from false wit to plain folly, where they end; and the fixed station of the other, between the confines of both; who under the name of witlings, have neither end nor measure. A kind of half-formed creature from he equivocal generation of vivacity and dulness, like those on the banks of Nile, from heat and mud.

Ver. 46. *But you who seek, &c.*] Our author having thus far, by way of introduction, explained the nature, use, and abuse of criticism, in a figurative description of the qualities and characters of critics, proceeds now to deliver the precepts of the art. The first of which, from ver. 45 to 68, is, that he who sets up for a critic should previously examine his own strength, and see how far he is qualified for the exercise of his profession. He puts

Digitized by Google

him in a way to make this discovery, in that admirable direction given ver. 51.

And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.

He had shown above, that judgment, without taste or genius, is equally incapable of making a critic or a poet. In whatsoever subject then the critic's taste no longer accompanies his judgment, there he may be assured he is going out of his depth. This our author finely calls,

that point where sense and dulness meet.

and immediately adds the reason of his precept, the author of nature having so constituted the mental faculties, that one of them can never greatly excel, but at the expense of another. From this state of co-ordination in the mental faculties, and the influence and effects they have upon one another, the poet draws this consequence, that no one genius can excel in more than one art or science. The consequence shows the necessity of the precept, just as the premises, from which the consequence is drawn, show the reasonableness of it.

Ver. 68. *First follow nature, &c.*] The critic observing the directions before given, and now finding himself qualified for his office, is shown next how to exercise it. And as he was to attend to nature for a call, so he is first and principally to follow nature when called. And here again in this, as in the foregoing precept, our poet, from ver. 67 to 88, shows both the fitness and necessity of it. I. Its fitness. 1. Because nature is the source of poetic art, this art being only a representation of nature, who is its great exemplar and original. 2. Because nature is the end of art, the design of poetry being to convey the knowledge of nature in the most agreeable manner. 3. Because nature is the test of art, as she is unerring, constant, and still the same. Hence the poet observes, that as nature is the source, she conveys life to art; as she is the end, she conveys force to it, for the force of any thing arises from its being directed to its end; and as she is the test, she conveys beauty to it, for everything acquires beauty by its being reduced to its true standard. Such is the sense of these two important lines,

Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.

II. The necessity of the precept is seen from hence. The two constituent qualities of a composition, as such, are art and wit; but neither of these attains perfection, till the first be hid, and the other judiciously restrained. This only happens when nature is exactly followed; for then art never makes a parade; nor can wit commit an extravagance. Art, while it adheres to nature, and has so large a fund in the resources which nature supplies, disposes every thing with so much ease and simplicity, that we see nothing but those natural images it works with, while itself stands unobserved behind; but when art leaves nature, misled either by the bold sallies of fancy, or the quaint oddness of fashion, she is then obliged at every step to come forward, in a painful or pompous ostentation, in order to cover, to soften, or to regulate the shocking disproportion of unnatural images. In the first case, our poet compares art to the soul within, informing a beauteous body; but in the last, we are bid to consider it but as a mere outward garb, fitted only to hide the defects of a mis-

Digitized by Google

shapen one. As to wit, it might perhaps be imagined that this needed only judgment to govern it; but, as he well observes,

> wit and judgment often are at strife,
> Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.

They want therefore some friendly mediator; and this mediator is nature: and in attending to nature, judgment will learn where he should comply with the charms of wit; and wit how she ought to obey the sage directions of judgment.

Ver. 88. *Those rules of old, &c.*] Having thus, in his first precept, to follow nature, settled criticism on its true foundation; he proceeds to show, what assistance may be had from art. But lest this should be thought to draw the critic from the ground where our poet had before fixed him, he previously observes, from ver. 87 to 92, that these rules of art, which he is now about to recommend to the critic's observance, were not invented by abstract speculation; but discovered in the book of nature; and that therefore, though they may seem to restrain nature by laws, yet as they are laws of her own making, the critic is still properly in the very liberty of nature. These rules the ancient critics borrowed from the poets, who received them immediately from nature.

> Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,
> These drew from them what they derived from heav'n,

so that both are to be well studied.

Ver. 92. *Hear how learn'd Greece, &c.*] He speaks of the ancient critics first, and with great judgment, as the previous knowledge of them is necessary for reading the poets, with that fruit which the end here proposed requires. But having, in the foregoing observation, sufficiently explained the nature of ancient criticism, he enters on the subject treated of from ver. 91 to 118, with a sublime description of its end; which was to illustrate the beauties of the best writers, in order to excite others to an emulation of their excellence. From the raptures which these ideas inspire, the poet is brought back, by the follies of modern criticism, now before his eyes, to reflect on its base degeneracy. And as the restoring the art to its original purity and splendour is the great purpose of this poem, he first takes notice of those, who seem not to understand that nature is exhaustless; that new models of good writing may be produced in every age; and consequently, that new rules may be formed from these models, in the same manner as the old critics formed theirs, which was, from the writings of the ancient poets: but men wanting art and ability to form these new rules, were content to receive and file up for use, the old ones of Aristotle, Quintilian, Longinus, Horace, &c. with the same vanity and boldness that apothecaries practise, with their doctors' bills: and then rashly applying them to new originals (cases which they did not hit) it was no more in their power, than in their inclination, to imitate the candid practice of the ancients when

> The gen'rous critic fanned the poet's fire,
> And taught the world with reason to admire.

For, as ignorance, when joined with humility, produces stupid admiration, on which account it is commonly observed to be the mother of devotion and blind homage, so when joined with vanity (as it always is in bad critics) it gives birth to every iniquity of impudent abuse and slander. See an example

Digitized by Google

(for want of a better) in a late ridiculous and now forgotten thing, called the Life of Socrates;[1] where the head of the author (as a man of wit observed) has just made a shift to do the office of a *camera obscura*, and represent things in an inverted order, himself above, and Sprat, Rollin, Voltaire, and every other writer of reputation, below.

Ver. 118. *You then whose judgment, &c.*] He comes next to the ancient poets, the other and more intimate commentators of nature, and shows, from ver. 117 to 141, that the study of these must indispensably follow that of the ancient critics, as they furnish us with what the critics, who only give us general rules, cannot supply, while the study of a great original poet, in

> His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page:
> Religion, country, genius of his age;

will help us to those particular rules which only can conduct us safely through every considerable work we undertake to examine; and without which, we may cavil indeed, as the poet truly observes, but can never criticise. We might as well suppose that Vitruvius's book alone would make a perfect judge of architecture, without the knowledge of some great master-piece of science, such as the rotunda at Rome, or the temple of Minerva at Athens, as that Aristotle's should make a perfect judge of wit, without the study of Homer and Virgil. These therefore he principally recommends to complete the critic in his art. But as the latter of these poets has, by superficial judges, been considered rather as a copier of Homer, than an original from nature, our author obviates that common error, and shows it to have arisen (as often error does) from a truth, *viz.*, that Homer and nature were the same; that the ambitious young poet, though he scorned to stoop at anything short of nature, when he came to understand this great truth, had the prudence to contemplate nature in the place where she was seen to most advantage, collected in all her charms in the clear mirror of Homer. Hence it would follow, that though Virgil studied nature, yet the vulgar reader would believe him to be a copier of Homer; and though he copied Homer, yet the judicious reader would see him to be an imitator of nature, the finest praise which any one, who came after Homer, could receive.

Ver. 141. *Some beauties yet no precepts can declare, &c.*] Our author, in these two general directions for studying nature and her commentators, having considered poetry as it is, or may be reduced to rule, lest this should be mistaken as sufficient to attain perfection either in writing or judging, he proceeds from ver. 140 to 201, to point up to those sublimer beauties which rules will never reach, nor enable us either to execute or taste,—beauties, which rise so high above all precept as not even to be described by it; but being entirely the gift of heaven, art and reason have no further share in them than just to regulate their operations. These sublimities of poetry (like the mysteries of religion, some of which are above reason, and some contrary to it) may be divided into two sorts, such as are above rules, and such as are contrary to them.

Ver. 146. *If, where the rules, &c.*] The first sort our author describes from ver. 145 to 152, and shows that where a great beauty is in the poet's view,

[1] The author of this work, in which some of Warburton's opinions were attacked, was John Gilbert Cooper. He was a vain man, with a slight tincture of learning, and very small abilities. Burke called him an insufferable coxcomb.

Digitized by Google

which no stated rules will authorise him how to reach, there, as the purpose of rules is only to attain an end like this, a lucky licence will supply the place of them: nor can the critic fairly object, since this licence, for the reason given above, has the proper force and authority of a rule.

Ver. 152. *Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend, &c.*] He describes next the second sort, the beauties against rule. And even here, as he observes, from ver. 151 to 161, the offence is so glorious, and the fault so sublime, that the true critic will not dare either to censure or reform them. Yet still the poet is never to abandon himself to his imagination. The rules laid down for his conduct in this respect are these: 1. That though he transgress the letter of some one particular precept, yet that he be still careful to adhere to the end or spirit of them all, which end is the creation of one uniform perfect whole. And 2. That he have, in each instance, the authority of the dispensing power of the ancients to plead for him. These rules observed, this licence will be seldom used, and only when he is compelled by need, which will disarm the critic, and screen the offender from his laws.

Ver. 169. *I know there are, &c.*] But as some modern critics have pretended to say, that this last reason is only justifying one fault by another, our author goes on, from ver. 168 to 181, to vindicate the ancients; and to show that this presumptuous thought, as he calls it, proceeds from mere ignorance, —as where their partiality will not let them see that this licence is sometimes necessary for the symmetry and proportion of a perfect whole, in the light, and from the point, wherein it must be viewod; or where their haste will not give them time to observe, that a deviation from rule is for the sake of attaining some great and admirable purpose. These observations are further useful, as they tend to give modern critics an humbler opinion of their own abilities, and a higher of the authors they undertake to criticise. On which account he concludes with a fine reproof of their use of that common proverb perpetually in the mouths of the critics, "quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus;" misunderstanding the sense of Horace, and taking quandoque for aliquando:

> Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,
> Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

Ver. 181. *Still green with bays, &c.*] But now fired with the name of Homer, and transported with the contemplation of those beauties which a cold critic can neither see nor conceive, the poet, from ver. 180 to 201, breaks out into a rapturous salutation of the rare felicity of those few ancients who have risen superior over time and accidents; and disdaining, as it were, any longer to reason with his critics, offers this as the surest confutation of their censures. Then with the humility of a suppliant at the shrine of immortals, and the sublimity of a poet participating of their fire, he turns again to these ancient worthies, and apostrophises their Manes:

> Hail, bards triumphant! &c.

Ver. 200. *T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!*] This line concludes the first division of the poem; in which we see the subject of the first and second part, and likewise the connexion they have with one another. It serves likewise to introduce the second. The effect of studying the ancients, as here recommended, would be the admiration of their superior sense, which, if it will not of itself dispose moderns to a diffidence of their own (one of the great uses, as well as natural fruits of that study), our author, to help forward their modesty, in his second part shows them (in a regular deductien of the

Digitized by Google

causes and effects of wrong judgment) their own bright image and amiable turn of mind.

Ver. 201. *Of all the causes, &c.*] Having, in the first part, delivered rules for perfecting the art of criticism, the second is employed in explaining the impediments to it. The order of the two parts was well adjusted. For the causes of wrong judgment being pride, superficial learning, a bounded capacity, and partiality, they to whom this part is principally addressed, would not readily be brought either to see the malignity of the causes, or to own themselves concerned in the effects, had not the author previously both enlightened and convinced them, by the foregoing observations, on the vastness of art, and narrowness of wit; the extensive study of human nature and antiquity; and the characters of ancient poetry and criticism; the natural remedies to the four epidemic disorders he is now endeavouring to redress.

Ver. 201. *Of all the causes, &c.*] The first cause of wrong judgment is pride. He judiciously begins with this, from ver. 200 to 215, as on other accounts, so on this, that it is the very thing which gives modern criticism its character, whose complexion is abuse and censure. He calls it the vice of fools, by which term is not meant those to whom nature has given no judgment (for he is here speaking of what misleads the judgment), but those to whom learning and study have given more erudition than taste, as appears from the happy similitude of an ill-nourished body, where the same words which express the cause, express likewise the nature of pride:

> For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find,
> What wants in blood and spirits, swelled with wind.

It is the business of reason, he tells us, to dispel the cloud in which pride involves the mind: but the mischief is, that the rays of reason, diverted by self-love, sometime gild this cloud, instead of dispelling it. So that the judgment, by false lights reflected back upon itself, is still apt to be a little dazzled, and to mistake its object. He therefore advises to call in still more helps:

> Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
> Make use of ev'ry friend and ev'ry foe.

Both the beginning and conclusion of this precept are remarkable. The question is of the means to subdue pride. He directs the critic to begin with a distrust of himself; and this is modesty, the first mortification of pride: and then to seek the assistance of others, and make use even of an enemy; and this is humility, the last mortification of pride: for when a man can once bring himself to submit to profit by an enemy, he has either already subdued his vanity, or is in a fair way of so doing.

Ver. 215. *A little learning, &c.*] We must here remark the poet's skill in his disposition of the causes obstructing true judgment. Each general cause which is laid down first, has its own particular cause in that which follows. Thus, the second cause of wrong judgment, superficial learning, is what occasions that critical pride, which he places first.

Ver. 216. *Drink deep, &c.*] Nature and learning are the pole-stars of all true criticism: but pride obstructs the view of nature; and a smattering of letters makes us insensible of our ignorance. To avoid this ridiculous situation, the poet, from ver. 214 to 233, advises, either to drink deep, or not to drink at all; for the least sip at this fountain is enough to make a bad critic, while even a moderate draught can never make a good one. And yet the

Digitized by Google

labours and difficulties of drinking deep are so great, that a young author, "fired with ideas of fair Italy," and ambitious to snatch a palm from Rome, here engages in an undertaking like that of Hannibal: finely illustrated by the similitude of an inexperienced traveller penetrating through the Alps.

Ver. 233. *A perfect judge, &c.*] The third cause of wrong judgment is a narrow capacity; the natural cause of the foregoing defect, acquiescence in superficial learning. This bounded capacity our author shows, from ver. 232 to 384, betrays itself two ways: in its judgment both of the matter, and the manner of the work criticised. Of the matter, in judging by parts, or in having one favourite part to a neglect of all the rest. Of the manner, in confining men's regard only to conceit, or language, or numbers. This is our poet's order, and we shall follow him as it leads us, only just observing one general beauty which runs through this part of the poem; it is,—that under each of these heads of wrong judgment, he has intermixed excellent precepts for the right. We shall take notice of them as they occur.

He exposes the folly of judging by parts very artfully, not by a direct description of that sort of critic, but of his opposite, a perfect judge, &c. Nor is the elegance of this conversion less than the art; for as, in poetical *style*, one word or figure is still put for another, in order to catch new lights from distant images, and reflect them back upon the subject in hand, so in poetical *matter* one person or description may be commodiously employed for another, with the same advantage of representation. It is observable that our author makes it almost the necessary consequence of judging by parts, to find fault: and this not without much discernment: for the several parts of a complete whole, when seen only singly, and known only independently, must always have the appearance of irregularity,—often of deformity; because the poet's design being to create a resultive beauty from the artful assemblage of several various parts into one natural whole, those parts must be fashioned with regard to their mutual relations in the stations they occupy in that whole, from whence the beauty required is to arise; but that regard will occasion so unreducible a form in each part, when considered singly, as to present a very mis-shapen form.

Ver. 253. *Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,*] He shows next, from ver. 252 to 263, that to fix our censure on single parts, though they happen to want an exactness consistent enough with their relation to the rest, is even then very unjust: and for these reasons:—1. Because it implies an expectation of a faultless piece, which is a vain fancy. 2. Because no more is to be expected of any work than that it fairly attains its end. But the end may be attained, and yet these trivial faults committed: therefore, in spite of such faults, the work will merit that praise that is due to everything which attains its end. 3. Because sometimes a great beauty is not to be procured, nor a notorious blemish to be avoided, but by suffering one of these minute and trivial errors. 4. And lastly, because the general neglect of them is a praise, as it is the indication of a genius, attentive to greater matters.

Ver 263. *Most critics, fond of some subservient art, &c.*] II. The second way in which a narrow capacity, as it relates to the matter, shows itself, is judging by a favourite part. The author has placed this, from ver. 262 to 285, after the other of judging by parts, with great propriety, it being indeed a natural consequence of it. For when men have once left the whole to turn their attention to the separate parts, that regard and reverence due only to a whole is fondly transferred to one or other of its parts. And thus we see, that heroes themselves, as well as hero-makers, even kings, as well as poets

Digitized by Google

and critics, when they chance never to have had, or long to have lost the idea of that which is the only legitimate object of their office, the care and conservation of the whole, are wont to devote themselves to the service of some favourite part, whether it be love of money, military glory, despotic power, &c. And all, as our author says on this occasion,

to one loved folly sacrifice.

This general misconduct much recommends that maxim in good poetry and politics, to give a principal attention to the whole,—a maxim which our author has elsewhere shown to be equally true likewise in morals and religion, as being founded in the order of things; for if we examine we shall find the misconduct here complained of to arise from this imbecility of our nature, that the mind must always have something to rest upon, to which the passions and affections may be interestingly directed. Nature prompts us to seek it in the most worthy objects; and reason points us to a whole, or system: but the false lights which the passions hold out confound and dazzle us; we stop short; and, before we get to a whole, take up with some part, which thenceforth becomes our favourite.

Ver. 285. *Thus critics of less judgment than caprice,*
Curious not knowing, not exact but nice,
Form short ideas, &c.]

2. He concludes his observations on those two sorts of judges by parts, with this general reflection:—The curious not knowing are the first sort, who judge by parts, and with a microscopic sight (as he says elsewhere) examine bit by bit. The not exact but nice, are the second, who judge by a favourite part, and talk of a whole to cover their fondness for a part, as philosophers do of principles, in order to obtrude notions and opinions in their stead. But the fate common to both is, to be governed by caprice and not by judgment, and consequently to form short ideas, or to have ideas short of truth; though the latter sort, through a fondness to their favourite part, imagine that it comprehends the whole in epitome, as the famous hero of La Mancha, mentioned just before, used to maintain, that knight errantry comprised within itself the quintessence of all science, civil, military, and religious.

Ver. 289. *Some to conceit alone, &c.*] We come now to that second sort of bounded capacity, which betrays itself in its judgment on the manner of the work criticised. And this our author prosecutes from ver. 288 to 384. These are again subdivided into divers classes.

Ver. 289. *Some to conceit alone, &c.*] The first, from ver. 288 to 305, are those who confine their attention solely to conceit or wit. And here again the critic by parts, offends doubly in the manner, just as he did in the matter; for he not only confines his attention to a part, when it should be extended to the whole, but he likewise judges falsely of that part. And this, as the other, is unavoidable, the parts in the manner bearing the same close relation to the whole, that the parts in the matter do; to which whole, the ideas of this critic have never yet extended. Hence it is, that our author, speaking here of those who confine their attention solely to conceit or wit, describes the distinct species of true and false wit, because they not only mistake a wrong disposition of true wit for a right, but likewise false wit for true. He describes false wit first, from ver. 288 to 297,

Some to conceit alone, &c.,

where the reader may observe our author's address in representing, in a

Digitized by Google

description of false wit, the false disposition of the true; as the critic by parts is apt to fall into both these errors.

He next describes true wit, from ver. 296 to 305,

True wit is nature to advantage dressed, &c.

And here again the reader may observe the same beauty; not only an explanation of true wit, but likewise of the right disposition of it, which the poet illustrates, as he did the wrong, by ideas taken from the art of painting, in the theory of which he was exquisitely skilled.

Ver. 305. *Others for language, &c.*] He proceeds secondly to those contracted critics, whose whole concern turns upon language, and shows, from ver. 304 to 337, that this quality, where it holds the principal place in a work, deserves no commendation:—1. Because it excludes qualities more essential. And when the abounding verbiage has choked and suffocated the sense, the writer will be obliged to varnish over the mischief with all the false colouring of eloquence. 2. Secondly, because the critic who busies himself with this quality alone, is unable to make a right judgment of it; because true expression is only the dress of thought, and so must be perpetually varied according to the subject, and manner of treating it. But those who never concern themselves with the sense, can form no judgment of the correspondence between that and the language.

Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable, &c.

Now as these critics are ignorant of this correspondence, their whole judgment in language is reduced to verbal criticism, or the examination of single words; and generally those which are most to his taste, are (for an obvious reason) such as smack most of antiquity, on which account our author has bestowed a little raillery upon it; concluding with a short and proper direction concerning the use of words, so far as regards their novelty and ancientry.

Ver. 337. *But most by numbers judge, &c.*] The last sort are those, from ver. 336 to 384, whose ears are attached only to the harmony of a poem. Of which they judge as ignorantly and as perversely as the other sort did of the eloquence, and for the same reason. Our author first describes that false harmony with which they are so much captivated; and shows that it is wretchedly flat and unvaried: for

Smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong.

He then describes the true: 1. As it is in itself, constant; with a happy mixture of strength and sweetness, in contradiction to the roughness and flatness of false harmony: and 2. As it is varied in compliance to the subject, where the sound becomes an echo to the sense, so far as is consistent with the preservation of numbers, in contradiction to the monotony of false harmony. Of this he gives us, in the delivery of his precepts, four beautiful examples of smoothness, roughness, slowness, and rapidity. The first use of this correspondence of the sound to the sense, is to aid the fancy in acquiring a perfecter and more lively image of the thing represented. A second and nobler, is to calm and subdue the turbulent and selfish passions, and to raise and warm the beneficent, which he illustrates in the famous adventure of Timotheus and Alexander, where, in referring to Mr. Dryden's Ode on that subject, he turns it to a high compliment on his favourite poet.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 384. *Avoid extremes, &c.*] Our author is now come to the last cause of wrong judgment, partiality,—the parent of the immediately preceding cause, a bounded capacity, nothing so much narrowing and contracting the mind as prejudices entertained for or against things or persons. This, therefore, as the main root of all the foregoing, he prosecutes at large, from ver. 383 to 474. First, to ver. 394, he previously exposes that capricious turn of mind, which, by running into extremes, either of praise or dispraise, lays the foundation of an habitual partiality. He cautions, therefore, both against one and the other; and with reason; for excess of praise is the mark of a bad taste; and excess of censure, of a bad digestion.

Ver. 394. *Some foreign writers, &c.*] Having explained the disposition of mind which produces an habitual partiality, he proceeds to expose this partiality in all the shapes in which it appears both amongst the unlearned and the learned.

I. In the unlearned it is seen, first, in an unreasonable fondness for, or aversion to, our own or foreign, to ancient or modern writers. And as it is the mob of unlearned readers he is here speaking of, he exposes their folly in a very apposite similitude:

> Thus wit, like faith, by each man is applied
> To one small sect, and all are damned beside.

But he shows, from ver. 396 to 408, that these critics have as wrong notions of reason as those bigots have of God; for that genius is not confined to times or climates; but, as the common gift of nature, is extended throughout all ages and countries; that indeed this intellectual light, like the material light of the sun, may not shine at all times, and in every place with equal splendour, but be sometimes clouded with popular ignorance, and sometimes again eclipsed by the discountenance of the great; yet it shall still recover itself, and, by breaking through the strongest of these impediments, manifest the eternity of its nature.

Ver. 408. *Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,*] A second instance of unlearned partiality is (as he shows from ver. 407 to 424) men's going always along with the cry, as having no fixed nor well-grounded principles whereon to raise any judgment of their own. A third is reverence for names, of which sort, as he well observes, the worst and vilest are the idolizers of names of quality; whom therefore he stigmatises as they deserve. Our author's temper as well as his judgment is here seen, in throwing this species of partiality amongst the unlearned critics. His affection for letters would not suffer him to conceive, that any learned critic could ever fall into so low a prostitution.

Ver. 424. *The vulgar thus—As oft the learned—*] II. He comes in the second place, from ver. 423 to 452, to consider the instances of partiality in the learned. 1. The first is singularity. For, as want of principles, in the unlearned, necessitates them to rest on the common judgment as always right, so adherence to false principles (that is, to notions of their own) mislead the learned into the other extreme of supposing the common judgment always wrong. And as, before, our author compared those to bigots, who made true faith to consist in believing after others, so he compares these to schismatics, who make it to consist in believing as no one ever believed before, which folly he marks with a lively stroke of humour in the turn of the thought:

> So schismatics the plain believers quit,
> And are but damned for having too much wit.

Digitized by Google

2. The second is novelty. And as this proceeds sometimes from fondness, sometimes from vanity, he compares the one to the passion for a mistress, and the other to the pride of being in fashion; but the excuse common to both is, the daily improvement of their judgment:

> Ask them the cause; they're wiser still they say;
> And still to-morrow's wiser than to-day.

Now as this is a plausible pretence for their inconstancy, and our author has himself afterwards approved of it, as a remedy against obstinacy and pride, where he says, ver. 570,

> But you with pleasure own your errors past,
> And make each day a critique on the last,

he has been careful, by the turn of the expression in this place, to show the difference between the pretence and the remedy. For time, considered only as duration, vitiates as frequently as it improves. Therefore to expect wisdom as the necessary attendant of length of days, unrelated to long experience, is vain and delusive. This he illustrates by a remarkable example, where we see time, instead of becoming wiser, destroying good letters, to substitute school divinity in their place; the genius of which kind of learning, the character of its professors, and the fate, which, sooner or later, always attends whatsoever is wrong or false, the poet sums up in those four lines:

> Faith, gospel, all, seemed made to be disputed, &c.

And in conclusion he observes, that perhaps this mischief, from love of novelty, might not be so great, did it not, along with the critic, infect the writer likewise, who, when he finds his readers disposed to take ready wit on the standard of current folly, never troubles himself to think of better payment.

Ver. 452. *Some valuing those of their own side or mind, &c.*] 3. The third and last instance of partiality in the learned, is party and faction, which is considered from ver. 451 to 474, where he shows how men of this turn deceive themselves, when they load a writer of their own side with commendation. They fancy they are paying tribute to merit, when they are only sacrificing to self-love. But this is not the worst. He further shows, that this party spirit has often very ill effects on science itself, while, in support of faction, it labours to depress some rising genius, that was, perhaps, raised by nature to enlighten his age and country. By which he would insinuate, that all the baser and viler passions seek refuge, and find support in party madness.

Ver. 474. *Be thou the first, &c.*] The poet having now gone through the last cause of wrong judgment, and the root of all the rest, partiality, and ended his remarks upon it with a detection of the two rankest kinds, those which arise out of party rage and envy, takes the occasion, which this affords him, of closing his second division in the most graceful manner, from ver. 473 to 560, by concluding from the premises, and calling upon the true critic to be careful of his charge, which is the protection and support of wit; for, the defence of it from malevolent censure is its true protection, and the illustration of its beauties, is its true support.

He first shows, the critic ought to do this service without loss of time, and on these motives:—1. Out of regard to himself, for there is some merit in giving the world notice of an excellence, but little or none, in pointing, like an index, to the beaten road of admiration. 2. Out of regard to the poem,

Digitized by Google

for the short duration of modern works requires that they should begin to live betimes. He compares the life of modern wit (which in a changeable dialect, must soon pass away), and that of the ancient (which survives in an universal language), to the difference between the patriarchal age and our own, and observes, that while the ancient writings live for ever, as it were, in brass and marble, the modern are but like paintings, which, of how masterly a hand soever, have no sooner gained their requisite perfection by the softening and ripening of their tints, which they do in a very few years, but they begin to fade and die away. 3. Lastly, our author shows that the critic ought in justice to do this service out of regard to the poet, when he considers the slender dowry the muse brings along with her. In youth it is only a vain and short-lived pleasure; and in maturer years, an accession of care and labour, in proportion to the weight of reputation to be sustained, and of the increase of envy to be opposed: and therefore, concludes his reasoning on this head with that pathetic and insinuating address to the critic, from ver. 508 to 526.

Ah! let not learning, &c.

Ver. 526. *But if in noble minds some dregs remain, &c.*] So far as to what ought to be the true critic's principal study and employment. But if the sour critical humour abounds, and must therefore needs have vent, he directs to its proper object, and shows, from ver. 525 to 556, how it may be innocently and usefully pointed. This is very observable; our author had made spleen and disdain the characteristic of the false critic, and yet here supposes them inherent in the true. But it is done with judgment, and a knowledge of nature. For as bitterness and astringency in unripe fruits of the best kind are the foundation and capacity of that high spirit, race, and flavour which we find in them, when perfectly concocted by the warmth and influence of the sun, and which, without those qualities, would gain no more by that influence than only a mellow insipidity, so spleen and disdain in the true critic, when improved by long study and experience, ripen into an exactness of judgment and an elegance of taste, although, in the false critic, lying remote from the influence of good letters, they remain in all their first offensive harshness and acerbity. The poet therefore shows how, after the exaltation of these qualities into their state of perfection, the very dregs (which, though precipitated, may possibly, on some occasions, rise and ferment even in a noble mind) may be usefully employed, that is to say, in branding obscenity and impiety. Of these, he explains the rise and progress, in a beautiful picture of the different geniuses of the two reigns of Charles II. and William III. The former of which gave course to the most profligate luxury; the latter to a licentious impiety. These are the crimes our author assigns over to the caustic hand of the critic; but concludes however, from ver. 555 to 560, with this necessary admonition, to take care not to be misled into unjust censure, either on the one hand, by a pharisaical niceness, or on the other by a self-consciousness of guilt. And thus the second division of his Essay ends: the judicious conduct of which is worthy our observation. The subjects of it are the causes of wrong judgment. These he derives upwards from cause to cause, till he brings them to their source, an immoral partiality: for as he had, in the first part,

traced the Muses upward to their spring,

and shown them to be derived from heaven, and the offspring of virtue, so

Digitized by Google

hath he here pursued this enemy of the muses, the bad critic, to his low original, in the arms of his nursing mother immorality. This order naturally introduces, and at the same time shows the necessity of, the subject of the third and last division, which is, on the morals of the critic.

Ver. 560. *Learn then, &c.*] We enter now on the third part, the morals of the critic. There seemed a peculiar necessity of inculcating precepts of this sort to the critic, by reason of that native acerbity so often found in the profession; of which, a short memorial will soon convince the reader, and at the same time inform him why our author has here included all critical morals in candour, modesty, and good breeding. When, in these latter ages, human learning reared its head in the West, and its tail, verbal criticism, was of course to rise with it, the madness of critics presently became so offensive, that the sober stupidity of the monks might appear the more tolerable evil. J. Argyropylus, a mercenary Greek, who came to teach school in Italy after the sacking of Constantinople by the Turk, used to maintain that Cicero understood neither philosophy nor Greek; while another of his countrymen, J. Lascaris by name, threatened to demonstrate that Virgil was no poet. However, these men raised in the west of Europe an appetite for the Greek language. So that Hermolaus Barbarus, a noted critic and most passionate admirer of it, used to boast that he had invoked and raised the devil, about the meaning of the Aristotelian ἐντελέχεια. As this man was famous for his enchantments, so one, whom Balzac speaks of, was as useful to letters by his revelations, and was wont to say, that the meaning of such a verse in Persius, no one knew but God and himself. But they were not all so modest. The celebrated Pomponius Lætus, in excess of veneration for antiquity, became a real pagan, raised altars to Romulus, and sacrificed to the gods of Greece. But if the Greeks cried down Cicero, the Italian critics knew how to support his credit. Every one has heard of the childish excesses into which the fondness for being thought Ciceronians carried the most celebrated Italians of this time. They generally abstained from reading the scripture for fear of spoiling their style, and Cardinal Bembo used to call the epistles of St. Paul by the contemptuous name of epistolaccias,—great overgrown epistles. But Erasmus cured this frenzy in that masterpiece of good sense, entitled Ciceronianus, for which, as lunatics treat their physicians, the elder Scaliger insulted him with all the brutal fury peculiar to his family and profession. His son Joseph and Salmasius had such endowments of art and nature as might have made them public blessings; yet how did these savages tear and worry one another. The choicest of Joseph's flowers of speech were *stercus diaboli*, and *lutum stercore maceratum*. It is true these were strewn upon his enemies. He treated his friends better; for in a letter to Thuanus, speaking of two of them, Clavius and Lipsius, he calls the first "a monster of ignorance," and the other "a slave to the Jesuits" and an "idiot." But so great was his love of sacred amity, that he says, at the same time, "I still keep up a correspondence with him, notwithstanding his idiotry, for it is my principle to be constant in my friendships.—Je ne reste de lui écrire nonobstant son idioterie, d'autant que je suis constant en amitié." The character he gives of his own work, in the same letter, is no less extraordinary: "Vous vous pouvez assurer que nostre Eusebe sera un tresor des merveilles de la doctrine chronologique." But this modest account of his chronology is a trifle in comparison of the just esteem Salmasius conceived of himself, as Mr. Colomies tells the story: This critic one day meeting two of his brethren, Messrs. Gaulmin and Maussac, in the royal library at Paris, Gaulmin, in a virtuous

Digitized by Google

consciousness of their importance, told the other two that he believed they three could make head against all the learned in Europe. To which the great Salmasius fiercely replied, "Do you and Mr. Maussac join yourselves to all that is learned in the world, and you shall find that I alone am a match for you all." Vossius tells us that, when Laur. Valla had snarled at every name of the first order in antiquity, such as Aristotle, Cicero, and one whom I should have thought this critic was likeliest to pass by, the redoubtable Priscian, he impiously boasted that he had arms even against Christ himself. But Codrus Urcæus went further, and actually used those arms the other only threatened with. This man while he was preparing some trifling piece of criticism for the press, had the misfortune to hear his papers were burned, on which he is reported to have broke out, "Quodnam ego tantum scelus concepi, O Christe; quem ego tuorum unquam læsi, ut ita inexpiabili in me odio debacchéris? Audi ea, quæ tibi mentis compos et ex animo dicam. Si forte, cum ad ultimam vitæ finem pervenero, supplex accedam ad te oratum, neve audias, neve inter tuos accipias oro; cum infernis Diis in æternum vitam agere decrevi." Whereupon, says my author, he quitted the converse of men, threw himself into the thickest of a forest, and there wore out the wretched remains of life in all the agonies of despair.

But to return to the poem. This third and last part is in two divisions. In the first of which, from ver. 559 to 631, our author inculcates the morals by precept. In the second, from ver. 630 to the end, by example. His first precept, from ver. 561 to 566, recommends candour, for its use to the critic, and to the writer criticised.

2. The second, from ver. 565 to 572, recommends modesty, which manifests itself in these four signs: 1. Silence where it doubts,

Be silent always when you doubt your sense;

2. A seeming diffidence where it knows,

And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence;

3. A free confession of error where wrong,

But you with pleasure own your errors past;

4. And a constant review and scrutiny even of those opinions which it still thinks right.

And make each day a critique on the last.

3. The third, from ver. 571 to 584, recommends good-breeding, which will not force truth dogmatically upon men, as ignorant of it, but gently insinuates it to them, as not sufficiently attentive to it. But as men of breeding are apt to fall into two extremes, he prudently cautions against them. The one is a backwardness in communicating their knowledge, out of a false delicacy, and for fear of being thought pedants: the other, and much more common extreme, is a mean complaisance, which those who are worthy of your advice do not need, to make it acceptable; for such can best bear reproof in particular points, who best deserve commendation in general.

Ver. 584. *'Twere well might critics, &c.*] The poet having thus recommended in his general rules of conduct for the judgment, these three critical virtues to the heart, shows next, from ver. 583 to 631, upon what three sorts of writers these virtues, together with the advice conveyed under them, would be thrown away; and which is worse, be repaid with obloquy and scorn.

Digitized by Google

These are the false critic, the dull man of quality, and the bad poet, each of which species of incorrigible writers he hath very exactly painted. But having drawn the last of them at full length, and being always attentive to the two main branches of his subject, which are, of writing and judging well, he re-assumes the character of the bad critic (whom he had touched upon before), to contrast him with the other; and makes the characteristic common to both, to be a never-ceasing repetition of their own impertinence.

The poet—still runs on in a raging vein, &c. ver. 606, &c.

The critic—with his own tongue still edifies his ears, 614, &c.

Than which there cannot be an observation more just, or more grounded on experience.

Ver. 631. *But where's the man, &c.*] II. The second division of this last part, which we now come to, is of the morals of critics, by example. For, having in the first, drawn a picture of the false critic, at large, he breaks out into an apostrophe, containing an exact and finished character of the true, which, at the same time, serves for an easy and proper introduction to this second division. For having asked, from ver. 630 to 643, *Where's the man, &c.*, he answers, from ver. 642 to 681, that he was to be found in the happier ages of Greece and Rome; in the characters of Aristotle and Horace, Dionysius and Petronius, Quintilian and Longinus, whose several excellencies he has not only well distinguished, but has contrasted them with a peculiar elegance. The profound science and logical method of Aristotle is opposed to the plain common sense of Horace, conveyed in a natural and familiar negligence; the study and refinement of Dionysius, to the gay and courtly ease of Petronius; and the gravity and minuteness of Quintilian, to the vivacity and general topics of Longinus. Nor has the poet been less careful in these examples, to point out their eminence in the several critical virtues he so carefully inculcated in his precepts. Thus in Horace he particularizes his candour; in Petronius, his good-breeding; in Quintilian, his free and copious instruction; and in Longinus, his great and noble spirit.

Ver. 681. *Thus long succeeding critics, &c.*] The next period in which the true critic, he tells us, appeared, was at the revival and restoration of letters in the West. This occasions his giving a short history, from ver. 682 to 709, of the decline and re-establishment of arts and sciences in Italy. He shows that they both fell under the same enemy, despotic power; and that when both had made some little efforts to recover themselves, they were soon again overwhelmed by a second deluge of another kind, namely, superstition; and a calm of dulness finished upon Rome and letters what the rage of barbarism had begun:

> A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
> And the monk finished what the Goth begun.

When things had long remained in this condition, and all hopes of recovery now seemed desperate, it was a critic, our author shows us, for the honour of the art he here teaches, who at length broke the charm of dulness, who dissipated the enchantment, and, like another Hercules, drove those cowled and hooded serpents from the Hesperian tree of knowledge, which they had so long guarded from human approach.

Ver. 697. *But see! each Muse, in Leo's golden days,*] This presents us with the second period in which the true critic appeared, of whom he has given us a complete idea in the single example of Marcus Hieronymus Vida; for his subject being poetical criticism, for the use principally of a critical

Digitized by Google

poet, his example is an eminent poetical critic, who had written of the Art of Poetry in verse.

Ver. 709. *But soon by impious arms, &c.*] This brings us to the third period, after learning had travelled still further West, when the arms of the Emperor, in the sack of Rome by the Duke of Bourbon, had driven it out of Italy, and forced it to pass the mountains. The examples he gives in this period, are of Boileau in France, and of the Lord Roscommon and the Duke of Buckingham in England: and these were all poets, as well as critics in verse. It is true, the last instance is of one who was no eminent poet, the late Mr. Walsh. This small deviation might be well overlooked, were it only for its being a pious office to the memory of his friend. But it may be further justified, as it was an homage paid in particular to the morals of the critic, nothing being more amiable than the character here drawn of this excellent person. He being our author's judge and censor, as well as friend, it gives him a graceful opportunity to add himself to the number of the later critics; and with a character of his own genius and temper sustained by that modesty and dignity which it is so difficult to make consistent, this performance concludes.

I have here given a short and plain account of the Essay on Criticism, concerning which, I have but one thing more to say, that when the reader considers the regularity of the plan, the masterly conduct of each part, the penetration into nature, and the compass of learning so conspicuous throughout, he should at the same time know, it was the work of an author who had not attained the twentieth year of his age.

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

Ver. 28. *In search of wit, these lose their common sense,*] This observation is extremely just. Search of wit is not only the occasion, but the efficient cause of the loss of common sense; for wit consisting in choosing out, and setting together such ideas from whose assemblage pleasant pictures may be drawn on the fancy, the judgment, through an habitual search of wit, loses, by degrees, its faculty of seeing the true relation of things; in which consists the exercise of common sense.

Ver. 32. *All fools have still an itching to deride,*
And fain would be upon the laughing side.]

The sentiment is just, and if Hobbes's account of laughter be true, that it arises from a silly pride, we see the reason of it. The expression too is fine; it alludes to the condition of idiots and natural fools, who are observed to be ever on the grin.

Ver. 43. *Their generation's so equivocal.*] It is sufficient that a principle of philosophy has been generally received, whether it be true or false, to justify a poet's use of it to set off his wit. But to recommend his argument, he should be cautious how he uses any but the true; for falsehood, when it is set too near the truth, will tarnish what it should brighten up. Besides, the analogy between natural and moral truth makes the principles of true philosophy the fittest for this use. Our poet has been pretty careful in observing this rule.

Ver. 51. *And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.*] Besides the peculiar sense explained in the comment, the words have still a more general meaning, and caution us against going on, when our ideas begin to grow obscure, as we are then most apt to do, though that obscurity be an admonition that we should leave off, for it arises, either from our small acquaintance with the subject, or the incomprehensibility of its nature, in which circumstances a genius will always write as badly as a dunce. An observation well worth the attention of all profound writers.

Ver. 56. *Thus in the soul while memory prevails,*
The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.]

These observations are collected from an intimate knowledge of human nature. The cause of that languor and heaviness in the understanding, which is almost inseparable from a very strong and tenacious memory, seems to be a want of the proper exercise of that faculty, the understanding being in a great measure unactive, while the memory is cultivating. As to the

Digitized by Google

other appearance, the decay of memory by the vigorous exercise of fancy, the poet himself seems to have intimated the cause of it in the epithet he has given to the imagination. For if, according to the atomic philosophy, the memory of things be preserved in a chain of ideas, produced by the animal spirits moving in continued trains, the force and rapidity of the imagination, breaking and dissipating the links of this chain by forming new associations, must necessarily weaken, and disorder the recollective faculties.

Ver. 67. *Would all but stoop to what they understand.*] The expression is delicate, and implies what is very true, that most men think it a degradation of their genius to employ it in what lies level to their comprehension, but had rather exercise their talents in the ambition of subduing what is placed above it.

Ver. 80. *Some, to whom heaven, &c.*] Here the poet (in a sense he was not, at first, aware of) has given an example of the truth of his observation, in the observation itself. The two lines stood originally thus:

> There are whom heav'n has blest with store of wit,
> Yet want as much again to manage it.

In the first line, wit is used, in the modern sense, for the effort of fancy; in the second line it is used in the ancient sense, for the result of judgment. This trick, played the reader, he endeavoured to keep out of sight, by altering the lines as they now stand,

> Some, to whom heav'n in wit has been profuse,
> Want as much more, to turn it to its use.

For the words, "to manage it," as the lines were at first, too plainly discovered the change put upon the reader, in the use of the word "wit." This is now a little covered by the latter expression of "turn it to its use." But then the alteration, in the preceding line, from "store of wit," to "profuse," was an unlucky change. For though he who has "store of wit" may want more, yet he to whom it was given in "profusion" could hardly be said to want more. The truth is, the poet had said a lively thing, and would, at all hazards, preserve the reputation of it, though the very topic he is upon obliged him to detect the imposition, in the very next lines, which show he meant two very different things, by the very same term, in the two preceding:

> For wit and judgment often are at strife,
> Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.

Ver. 88. *Those rules of old, &c.*] Cicero has, best of any one I know, explained what that thing is which reduces the wild and scattered parts of human knowledge into arts. "Nihil est quod ad artem redigi possit, nisi ille prius, qui illa tenet, quorum artem instituere vult, habeat illam scientiam, ut ex iis rebus, quarum ars nondum sit, artem efficere possit.—Omnia fere, quæ sunt conclusa nunc artibus, dispersa et dissipata quondam fuerunt, ut in musicis, &c. Adhibita est igitur ars quædam extrinsecus ex alio genere quodam, quod sibi totum PHILOSOPHI assumunt, quæ rem dissolutam divulsamque conglutinaret, et ratione quadam constringeret." De Orat. l. i. c. 41, 42.

Ver. 112, 114. *Some on the leaves—Some dryly plain.*] The first are the apes of those learned Italian critics who at the restoration of letters, having found the classic writers miserably deformed by the hands of monkish librarians, very commendably employed their pains and talents in restoring them to their native purity. The second, the plagiarists from the French critics, who

Digitized by Google

had made some admirable commentaries on the ancient critics. But that acumen and taste, which separately constitute the distinct value of those two species of Italian and French criticism, make no part of the character of these paltry mimics at home described by our poet in the following lines,

> These leave the sense, their learning to display,
> And those explain the meaning quite away.

Which species is the least hurtful, the poet has enabled us to determine in the lines with which he opens his poem,

> But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
> To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.

From whence we conclude that the Reverend Mr. Upton was much more innocently employed, when he quibbled upon Epictetus, than when he commented upon Shakespeare.[1]

Ver. 150. *Thus Pegasus, &c.*] We have observed how the precepts for writing and judging are interwoven throughout the whole poem. The sublime flight of a poet is first described, soaring above all vulgar bounds, to snatch a grace directly which lies beyond the reach of a common adventurer; and afterwards, the effect of that grace upon the true critic; whom it penetrates with an equal rapidity, going the nearest way to his heart, without passing through his judgment. By which is not meant that it could not stand the test of judgment; but that, as it was a beauty uncommon, and above rule, and the judgment habituated to determine only by rule, it makes its direct appeal to the heart, which, when once gained, soon brings over the judgment, whose concurrence (it being now enlarged and set above forms) is easily procured. That this is the poet's sublime conception appears from the concluding words:

> And all its end at once attains.

For poetry doth not attain all its end, till it hath gained the judgment as well as heart.

Ver. 209. *Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,*
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.]

A very sensible French writer makes the following remark on this species of pride: "Un homme qui sçait plusieurs langues, qui entend les auteurs grecs et latins, qui s'élève même jusqu'à la dignité de scholiaste; si cet homme venoit à peser son véritable mérite, il trouveroit souvent qu'il se réduit avoir eu des yeux et de la mémoire; il se garderoit bien de donner le nom respectable de science à une érudition sans lumière. Il y a une grande différence entre s'enrichir des mots ou des choses, entre alléguer des autorités ou des raisons. Si un homme pouvoit se surprendre à n'avoir que cette sorte de mérite, il en rougiroit plutôt que d'en être vain."

Ver. 235. *Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find*
Where Nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;]

The second line, in apologizing for those faults which the first says should be overlooked, gives the reason of the precept. For when a great writer's

[1] Upton published Critical Observations upon Shakespeare, and says that he offended Warburton by omitting to mention him. After Warburton had attacked him Upton retaliated.

Digitized by Google

attention is fixed on a general view of nature, and his imagination becomes warmed with the contemplation of great ideas, it can hardly be, but that there must be small irregularities in the disposition both of matter and style, because the avoiding these requires a coolness of recollection, which a writer so qualified and so busied is not master of.

Ver. 248. *The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!*] The Pantheon I would suppose; perhaps St. Peter's; no matter which; the observation is true of both. There is something very Gothic in the taste and judgment of a learned man, who despises the masterpiece of art, the Pantheon, for those very qualities which deserve our admiration. "Nous esmerveillons comme l'on fait si grand cas de ce Pantheon, veu que son edifice n'est de si grande industrie comme l'on crie: car chaque petit masson peut bien concevoir la maniere de sa façon tout en un instant: car estant la base si massive, et les murailles si espaisses, ne nous a semblé difficile d'y adjouster la voute à claire voye."—Pierre Belon's Observations, &c. The nature of the Gothic structures apparently led him into this mistake of the architectonic art in general; that the excellency of it consists in raising the greatest weight on the least assignable support, so that the edifice should have strength without the appearance of it, in order to excite admiration. But to a judicious eye such a building would have a contrary effect, the appearance (as our poet expresses it) of a monstrous height, or breadth, or length. Indeed, did the just proportions in regular architecture take off from the grandeur of a building, by all the single parts coming united to the eye, as this learned traveller seems to insinuate, it would be a reasonable objection to those rules on which this masterpiece of art was constructed. But it is not so. The poet tells us truly,

The whole at once is bold, and regular.

Ver. 267. *Once on a time, &c.*] This tale is so very apposite, that one would naturally take it to be of the poet's own invention; and so much in the spirit of Cervantes, that we might easily mistake it for one of the chief beauties of that incomparable satire. Yet, in truth it is neither; but a story taken by our author from the spurious Don Quixote, which shows how proper an use may be made of general reading, when if there be but one good thing in a book (as in that wretched performance there scarce was more) it may be picked out, and employed to an excellent purpose.

Ver. 285. *Thus critics, &c.*] In these two lines the poet finely describes the way in which bad writers are wont to imitate the qualities of good ones. As true judgment generally draws men out of popular opinions, so he who cannot get from the crowd by the assistance of this guide, willingly follows caprice, which will be sure to lead him into singularities. Again, true knowledge is the art of treasuring up only that which, from its use in life, is worthy of being lodged in the memory, and this makes the philosopher; but curiosity consists in a vain attention to every thing out of the way, and which for its inutility the world least regards, and this makes the antiquarian. Lastly, exactness is the just proportion of parts to one another, and their harmony in a whole; but he who has not extent of capacity for the exercise of this quality, contents himself with nicety, which is a busying oneself about points and syllables, and this makes the grammarian.

Ver. 297. *True wit is nature to advantage dressed, &c.*] This definition is very exact. Mr. Locke had defined wit to consist "in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together, with quickness and variety, wherein can

Digitized by Google

be found any resemblance or congruity, whereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy." But that great philosopher, in separating wit from judgment, as he does in this place, has given us (and he could therefore give us no other) only an account of wit in general, in which false wit, though not every species of it, is included. A striking image, therefore, of nature is, as Mr. Locke observes, certainly wit; but this image may strike on several other accounts, as well as for its truth and beauty, and the philosopher has explained the manner how. But it never becomes that wit which is the ornament of true poesy, whose end is to represent nature, but when it dresses that nature to advantage, and presents her to us in the brightest and most amiable light. And to know when the fancy has done its office truly, the poet subjoins this admirable test, viz. When we perceive that it gives us back the image of our mind. When it does that, we may be sure it plays no tricks with us; for this image is the creature of the judgment, and whenever wit corresponds with judgment, we may safely pronounce it to be true.

Ver. 311. *False eloquence, &c.*] This simile is beautiful. For the false colouring given to objects by the prismatic glass is owing to its untwisting, by its obliquities, those threads of light which nature had put together, in order to spread over its work an ingenious and simple candour, that should not hide but only heighten the native complexion of the objects. And false expression is nothing else but the straining and divaricating the parts of true expression; and then daubing them over with what the rhetoricians very properly term colours, in lieu of that candid light, now lost, which was reflected from them in their natural state, while sincere and entire.

Ver. 364. *'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,*
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.]

The judicious introduction of this precept is remarkable. The poets, and even some of the best of them, have been so fond of the beauty arising from this trivial observance, that their practice has violated the very end of the precept, which is the increase of harmony; and so they could but raise an echo, did not care whose ears they offended by its dissonance. To remedy this abuse therefore, our poet, by the introductory line, would insinuate, that harmony is always to be presupposed as observed, though it may and ought to be perpetually varied, so as to produce the effect here recommended.

Ver. 365. *The sound must seem an echo to the sense.*] Lord Roscommon says,

The sound is still a comment to the sense.

They are both well expressed, although so differently; for Lord Roscommon is showing how the sense is assisted by the sound; Mr. Pope, how the sound is assisted by the sense.

Ver. 402. *Which, from the first, &c.*] Genius is the same in all ages; but its fruits are various, and more or less excellent as they are checked or matured by the influence of government or religion upon them. Hence in some parts of literature the ancients excel; in others, the moderns, just as those accidental circumstances occurred.

Ver. 444. *Scotists.*] So denominated from Johannes Duns Scotus. Erasmus tells us, an eminent Scotist assured him, that it was impossible to understand one single proposition of this famous Duns, unless you had his whole metaphysics by heart. This hero of incomprehensible fame suffered a miserable reverse at Oxford in the time of Henry VIII. That grave anti-

Digitized by Google

quary, Mr. Antony Wood (in the vindication of himself and his writings from the reproaches of the Bishop of Salisbury), sadly laments the deformation, as he calls it, of that university, by the King's commissioners; and even records the blasphemous speeches of one of them, in his own words· "We have set Duns in Boccardo, with all his blind glossers, fast nailed up upon posts in all common houses of easement." Upon which our venerable antiquary thus exclaims: "If so be, the commissioners had such disrespect for that most famous author, J. Duns, who was so much admired by our predecessors, and so difficult to be understood, that the doctors of those times, namely, Dr. William Roper, Dr. John Keynton, Dr. William Mowse, &c. professed that, in twenty-eight years' study, they could not understand him rightly, what then had they for others of inferior note?" What indeed! But if so be, that most famous J. Duns was so difficult to be understood (for that this is a most theologic proof of his great worth is past all doubt), I should conceive our good old antiquary to be a little mistaken, and that the nailing up this Proteus of the schools was done by the commissioners in honour of the most famous Duns, there being no other way of catching the sense of so slippery and dodging an author, who had eluded the pursuit of three of their most renowned doctors in full cry after him, for eight and twenty years together. And this Boccardo in which he was confined, seemed very fit for the purpose, it being observed that men are never more serious and thoughtful than in that place of retirement.—Scribl.

Ver. 444. *Thomists,*] From Thomas Aquinas, a truly great genius, who, in those blind ages, was the same in theology, that our Friar Bacon was in natural philosophy; less happy than our countryman in this, that he soon became surrounded with a number of dark glossers, who never left him till they had extinguished the radiance of that light, which had pierced through the thickest night of monkery, the thirteenth century, when the Waldenses were suppressed, and Wickliffe not yet risen.

Ver. 445. *Amidst their kindred cobwebs.*] Were common sense disposed to credit any of the monkish miracles of the dark and blind ages of the church, it would certainly be one of the seventh century recorded by honest Bale. "In the sixth general council," says he, "holden at Constantinople, Anno Dom 680, contra Monothelitas, where the Latin mass was first approved, and the Latin ministers deprived of their lawful wives, spiders' webs, in wonderfull copye were seen falling down from above, upon the heads of the people, to the marvelous astonishment of many." The justest emblem and prototype of school metaphysics, the divinity of Scotists and Thomists, which afterwards fell, in wonderfull copye on the heads of the people, in support of transubstantiation, to the marvelous astonishment of many, as it continues to do to this day.

Ver. 450. *And authors think, &c.*] This is an admirable satire on those called authors in fashion, the men who get the laugh on their side. He shows on how pitiful a basis their reputation stands,—the changeling disposition of fools to laugh, who are always carried away with the last joke.

Ver. 463. *Milbourn*] The Rev. Mr. Luke Milbourn. Dennis served Mr. Pope in the same office. But these men are of all times, and rise up on all occasions. Sir Walter Raleigh had Alexander Ross; Chillingworth had Cheynel; Milton a first Edwards; and Locke a second; neither of them related to the third Edwards of Lincoln's Inn. They were divines of parts and learning: this a critic without one or the other. Yet (as Mr. Pope says of Luke Milbourn) the fairest of all critics; for having written against the

Digitized by Google

editor's remarks on Shakspear, he did him justice in printing, at the same time, some of his own.[1]

Ver. 468. *For envied wit, &c.*] This similitude implies a fact too often verified; and of which we need not seek abroad for examples. It is this, that frequently those very authors, who have at first done all they could to obscure and depress a rising genius, have at length been reduced to borrow from him, imitate his manner, and reflect what they could of his splendour, merely to keep themselves in some little credit. Nor hath the poet been less artful, to insinuate what is sometimes the cause. A youthful genius, like the sun rising towards the meridian, displays too strong and powerful beams for the dirty temper of inferior writers, which occasions their gathering, condensing, and blackening. But as he descends from the meridian (the time when the sun gives its gilding to the surrounding clouds) his rays grow milder, his heat more benign, and then

> ev'n those clouds at last adorn its way,
> Reflect new glories, and augment the day.

484. *So when, &c.*] This similitude from painting, in which our author discovers (as he always does on that subject) real science, has still a more peculiar beauty, as at the same time that it confesses the just superiority of ancient writings, it insinuates one advantage the modern have above them, which is this, that in these latter, our more intimate acquaintance with the occasion of writing, and with the manners described, lets us into those living and striking graces which may be well compared to that perfection of imitation given only by the pencil, while the ravages of time, amongst the monuments of former ages, have left us but the gross substance of ancient wit,—so much only of the form and fashion of bodies as may be expressed in brass or marble.

Ver. 507.—*by knaves undone!*] By which the poet would insinuate a common but shameful truth, that men in power, if they got into it by illiberal arts, generally left wit and science to starve.

Ver. 545. *Did all the dregs of bold Socinus drain;*] The seeds of this religious evil, as well as of the political good from whence it sprung (for good and evil are incessantly arising out of one another) were sown in the preceding fat age of pleasure. The mischiefs done during Cromwell's usurpation, by fanaticism, inflamed by erroneous and absurd notions of the doctrine of grace and satisfaction, made the loyal latitudinarian divines (as they were called) at the restoration, go so far into the other extreme of resolving all Christianity into morality, as to afford an easy introduction to socinianism, which in that reign (founded on the principles of liberty) men had full opportunity of propagating.

Ver. 561. *For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.*] The critic acts in two capacities, of assessor and of judge: in the first, science alone is sufficient; but the other requires morals likewise.

Ver. 631. *But where's the man, &c.*] The poet, by his manner of asking after this character, and telling us, when he had described it, that such once were critics, does not encourage us to search for it amongst modern writers. And indeed the discovery of him, if it could be made, would be but an invidious affair. However, I will venture to name the piece of criticism in

[1] When Warburton published his Shakespeare in 1747, Edwards exposed, in his Canons of Criticism, the dogmatism and absurdity of many of the comments and conjectures. His book was unanswerable, and Warburton was reduced to display his spleen in such sneers as the present.

Digitized by Google

which all these marks may be found. It is entitled, Q. Hor. Fl. Ars Poetica, et ejusd. Ep. ad Aug. with an English Commentary and Notes.[1]

Ver. 642. *with reason on his side!*] Not only on his side, but in actual employment. The critic makes but a mean figure, who when he has found out the beauties of his author, contents himself with showing them to the world in only empty exclamations. His office is to explain their nature, show from whence they arise, and what effects they produce, or in the better and fuller expression of the poet,

To teach the world with reason to admire.

Ver. 652. *Who conquered nature, &c.*] By this we must not understand physical nature, but moral. The force of the observation consists in giving it this sense. The poet not only uses the word nature, for human nature, throughout this poem; but also, where in the beginning of it, he lays down the principles of the arts he treats of, he makes the knowledge of human nature the foundation of all criticism and poetry. Nor is the observation less true than apposite. For Aristotle's natural inquiries were superficial and ill made, though extensive; but his logical and moral works are supremely excellent. In his moral, he has unfolded the human mind, and laid open all the recesses of the heart and understanding; and in his logical, he has not only conquered nature, but by his categories, has kept her in tenfold chains; not as dulness kept the muses in the Dunciad, to silence them; but as Aristæus held Proteus in Virgil, to deliver oracles.

Ver. 665. *See Dionysius, &c.*] In the first of these lines, on which the other depends, the peculiar excellence of this critic, and indeed the most material and useful part of a critic's office, is touched upon, who, like the refiner, purifies the rich ore of an original writer; for such a one busied in creating, often neglects to separate and refine the mass, pouring out his riches rather in bullion than in sterling.

Ver. 667. *Fancy and art, &c.*] "The chief merit of Petronius," says an objector,[2] "is that of telling a story with grace and ease." But the poet is not here speaking, nor was it his purpose to speak, of the chief merit of Petronius, but of his merit as a critic, which consisted, he tells us, in softening the art of a scholar with the ease of a courtier, and whoever reads and understands the critical part of his abominable story-telling will see that the poet has given his true character as a critic, which was the only thing he had to do with.

Ver. 693. *At length Erasmus, &c.*] Nothing can be more artful than the application of this example, or more happy than the turn of the compliment. To throw glory quite round the character of this admirable person, he makes it to be (as in fact it really was) by his assistance chiefly, that Leo was enabled to restore letters and the fine arts in his pontificate.

Ver. 694. *The glory of the priesthood and the shame!*] Our author elsewhere lets us know what he esteems to be the glory of the priesthood as well as of a christian in general, where comparing himself to Erasmus, he says,

In moderation placing all my glory,

[1] The work which Warburton vaunts as the only honest piece of modern criticism, was by his friend and flatterer Hurd. Personal partiality might excuse the undue exaltation of a feeble production, but is no apology for calumniating men who were quite as candid and far more able.

[2] The objector was Warton. He justly intimated that the character which Pope had given of Petronius, conveyed an erroneous idea of the nature of his writings.

Digitized by Google

and consequently what he regards as the shame of it. The whole of this character belonged eminently and almost solely to Erasmus: for the other reformers, such as Luther, Calvin, and their followers, understood so little in what true christian liberty consisted, that they carried with them, into the reformed churches, that very spirit of persecution, which had driven them from the church of Rome.

Ver. 696. *And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.*] In this attack on the established ignorance of the times, Erasmus succeeded so well as to bring good letters into fashion, to which he gave new splendour, by preparing for the press correct editions of many of the best ancient writers, both ecclesiastical and profane. But having laughed and shamed his age out of one folly, he had the mortification of seeing it run headlong into another. The virtuosi of Italy, in a superstitious dread of that monkish barbarity which he had so severely handled, would use no term (for now almost every man was become a Latin writer), not even when they treated of the highest mysteries of religion, which had not been consecrated in the capitol, and dispensed unto them from the sacred hand of Cicero. Erasmus observed the growth of this classical folly with the greater concern, as he discovered under all their attention to the language of old Rome, a certain fondness for its religion, in a growing impiety which disposed them to think irreverently of the christian faith. And he no sooner discovered it than he set upon reforming it; which he did so effectually in the dialogue, entitled Ciceronianus, that he brought the age back to that just temper, which he had been all his life endeavouring to mark out to it,—purity, but not pedantry in letters, and zeal, but not bigotry, in religion. In a word, by employing his great talents of genius and literature on subjects of general importance; and by opposing the extremes of all parties in their turns; he completed the real character of a true critic and an honest man.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

RAPE OF THE LOCK.

AN HEROI-COMICAL POEM.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1712.

Digitized by Google

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK.

AN HEROI-COMICAL POEM.

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos,
Sed juvat hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.
MART. LIB. 12. Ep. 36.

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT. 1712. 8vo.

This is the title-page of the original Rape of the Lock, in two cantos, which appeared anonymously in Lintot's Miscellany. The poem begins on p. 353 of the volume, and the previous piece ends at p. 320. What purported to be a second edition of the Miscellany came out in 1714, but except that the gap between p. 320 and p. 353 had been filled up, and that the Essay on Criticism is inserted at the end of the book, the work is merely a reissue, with a new title-page, of the first edition, and the Rape of the Lock, like the rest, is the old impression of 1712. Even the primitive "Table of Contents" was retained, though it omits the additional pieces, which were chiefly poems by Pope. His contributions to the Miscellany are, however, enumerated on the title-page of the second edition.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK.

AN HEROI-COMICAL POEM. IN FIVE CANTOS.

Written by Mr. POPE.

———A tonso est hoc nomen adepta capillo.—OVID.

London: Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT, at the Cross Keys in Fleet Street. 1714. 8vo.

The first enlarged edition. A second and third edition followed in the same year. After the Rape of the Lock had been included in the quarto of 1717, it was still printed in a separate form, and a "fifth edition corrected" was published by Lintot in 1718. He also inserted the work in the four editions of his Miscellanies, which appeared in the twelve years from 1720 to 1732. Lintot paid Pope £7 on March 21, 1712, for the Rape of the Lock in its first form, and gave £15 for the enlarged poem on February 20, 1714.

Digitized by Google

THE first sketch of this poem was written in less than a fortnight's time in 1711, in two cantos, and so printed in a Miscellany, without the name of the author. The machines were not inserted till a year after, when he published it, and annexed the dedication.—POPE, 1736.

The stealing of Miss Belle Fermor's hair was taken too seriously, and caused an estrangement between the two families, though they had lived so long in great friendship before. A common acquaintance, and well-wisher to both, desired me to write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was with this view that I wrote the Rape of the Lock, which was well received, and had its effect in the two families. Nobody but Sir George Brown was angry, and he was a good deal so, and for a long time. He could not bear that Sir Plume should talk nothing but nonsense. Copies of the poem got about, and it was like to be printed, on which I published the first draught of it (without the machinery) in a Miscellany of Tonson's. The machinery was added afterwards to make it look a little more considerable, and the scheme of adding it was much liked and approved of by several of my friends, and particularly by Dr. Garth, who, as he was one of the best natured men in the world, was very fond of it. The making the machinery, and what was published before, hit so well together is, I think, one of the greatest proofs of judgment of anything I ever did.—POPE in SPENCE.

It appears by the motto "Nolueram," etc., that the following poem was written or published at the lady's request. But there are some further circumstances not unworthy relating. Mr. Caryll (a gentleman who was secretary to Queen Mary, wife of James II., whose fortunes he followed into France, author of the comedy of Sir Solomon Single, and of several translations in Dryden's Miscellanies) originally proposed the subject to him, in a view of putting an end, by this piece of ridicule, to a quarrel that was risen between two noble families, those of Lord Petre and of Mrs. Fermor, on the trifling occasion of his having cut off a lock of her hair. The author sent it to the lady, with whom he was acquainted; and she took it so well as to give about copies of it. That first sketch, we learn from one of his letters, was written in less than a fortnight, in 1711, in two cantos only, and it was so printed; first, in a Miscellany of Bern. Lintot's, without the name of the author. But it was received so

Digitized by Google

well, that he made it more considerable the next year by the addition of the machinery of the sylphs, and extended it to five cantos. We shall give the reader the pleasure of seeing in what manner these additions were inserted, so as to seem not to be added, but to grow out of the poem. See Notes, Cant. I. ver. 9, etc. This insertion he always esteemed, and justly, the greatest effort of his skill and art as a poet.—WARBURTON.

I hope it will not be thought an exaggerated panegyric to say that the Rape of the Lock is the best satire extant; that it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life; and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted than that of any other heroi-comic poem. If some of the most candid among the French critics begin to acknowledge that they have produced nothing, in point of sublimity and majesty, equal to the Paradise Lost, we may also venture to affirm that in point of delicacy, elegance, and fine-turned raillery, on which they have so much valued themselves, they have produced nothing equal to the Rape of the Lock. It is in this composition Pope principally appears a poet, in which he has displayed more imagination than in all his other works taken together. It should, however, be remembered, that he was not the first former and creator of those beautiful machines, the sylphs, on which his claim to imagination is chiefly founded. He found them existing ready to his hand; but has, indeed, employed them with singular judgment and artifice.—WARTON.

The Rape of the Lock is the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all Pope's compositions. At its first appearance it was termed by Addison "merum sal." Pope, however, saw that it was capable of improvement; and having luckily contrived to borrow his machinery from the Rosicrucians, imparted the scheme, with which his head was teeming, to Addison, who told him that his work, as it stood, was "a delicious little thing," and gave him no encouragement to retouch it. This has been too hastily considered as an instance of Addison's jealousy; for as he could not guess the conduct of the new design, or the possibilities of pleasure comprised in a fiction of which there had been no examples, he might very reasonably and kindly persuade the author to acquiesce in his own prosperity, and forbear an attempt which he considered as an unnecessary hazard. Addison's counsel was happily rejected. Pope foresaw the future efflorescence of imagery then budding in his mind, and resolved to spare no art or industry of cultivation. The soft luxuriance of his fancy was already shooting, and all the gay varieties of diction were ready at his hand to colour and embellish it. His attempt was justified by its success. The Rape of the Lock stands forward, in the classes of literature, as the most exquisite example

Digitized by Google

of ludicrous poetry. Berkeley congratulated him upon the display of powers more truly poetical than he had shown before. With elegance of description and justness of precepts he had now exhibited boundless fertility of invention. He always considered the intermixture of the machinery with the action as his most successful exertion of poetical art. He indeed could never afterwards produce anything of such unexampled excellence. Those performances which strike with wonder are combinations of skilful genius with happy casualty; and it is not likely that any felicity, like the discovery of a new race of preternatural agents, should happen twice to the same man.

Of this poem the author was, I think, allowed to enjoy the praise for a long time without disturbance. Many years afterwards Dennis published some remarks upon it with very little force and with no effect; for the opinion of the public was already settled, and it was no longer at the mercy of criticism.[1]

To the praises which have been accumulated on the Rape of the Lock by readers of every class, from the critic to the waiting-maid, it is difficult to make any addition. Of that which is universally allowed to be the most attractive of all ludicrous compositions, let it rather be now inquired from what sources the power of pleasing is derived. Dr. Warburton, who excelled in critical perspicacity, has remarked that the preternatural agents are very happily adapted to the purposes of the poem. The heathen deities can no longer gain attention: we should have turned away from a contest between Venus and Diana. The employment of allegorical persons always excites conviction of its own absurdity; they may produce effects, but cannot conduct actions: when the phantom is put in motion it dissolves. Thus Discord may raise a mutiny, but Discord cannot conduct a march, nor besiege a town. Pope brought in view a new race of beings, with powers and passions proportionate to their operation. The sylphs and gnomes act at the toilet and the tea-table, what more terrific and more powerful phantoms perform on the stormy ocean or the field of battle; they give their proper help

[1] Dennis's Remarks on the Rape of the Lock were written in 1714, and published in 1728. "To cure the little gentleman of his wretched conceitedness, by giving him a view of his ignorance, his folly, and his natural impotence," Dennis, in 1717, brought out a critical pamphlet on three of his works, and kept back the exposure of the Rape of the Lock "*in terrorem*, which had so good an effect, that the author endeavoured for a time to counterfeit humility, and a sincere repentance, but no sooner did he believe that time had caused these things to be forgot, than he relapsed into ten times the folly and the madness that ever he had shown before." The fresh provocation was the Dunciad, and the treatise on the Profound, and poor Dennis printed his awe-inspiring Remarks on the Rape of the Lock, to give "the little gentleman" another lesson in humility.

Digitized by Google

and do their proper mischief. Pope is said by an objector,[1] not to have been the inventor of this petty nation; a charge which might with more justice have been brought against the author of the Iliad, who doubtless adopted the religious system of his country; for what is there but the names of his agents which Pope has not invented? Has he not assigned them characters and operations never heard of before? Has he not, at least, given them their first poetical existence? If this is not sufficient to denominate his work original, nothing original ever can be written.

In this work are exhibited, in a very high degree, the two most engaging powers of an author. New things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new. A race of aerial people, never heard of before, is presented to us in a manner so clear and easy, that the reader seeks for no further information, but immediately mingles with his new acquaintance, adopts their interests, and attends their pursuits, loves a sylph and detests a gnome. That familiar things are made new, every paragraph will prove. The subject of the poem is an event below the common incidents of common life; nothing real is introduced that is not seen so often as to be no longer regarded; yet the whole detail of a female day is here brought before us, invested with so much art of decoration, that, though nothing is disguised, everything is striking, and we feel all the appetite of curiosity for that from which we have a thousand times turned fastidiously away.

The purpose of the poet is, as he tells us, to laugh at "the little unguarded follies of the female sex." It is therefore without justice that Dennis charges the Rape of the Lock with the want of a moral, and for that reason sets it below the Lutrin, which exposes the pride and discord of the clergy. Perhaps neither Pope nor Boileau has made the world much better than he found it, but, if they had both succeeded, it were easy to tell who would have deserved most from public gratitude. The freaks, and humours, and spleen, and vanity of women, as they embroil families in discord, and fill houses with disquiet, do more to obstruct the happiness of life in a year than the ambition of the clergy in many centuries. It has been well observed, that the misery of man proceeds not from any single crush of overwhelming evil, but from small vexations continually repeated.

It is remarked by Dennis likewise that the machinery is superfluous; that by all the bustle of preternatural operation the main event is neither hastened nor retarded. To this charge an efficacious answer is not easily made. The sylphs cannot be said to help or to oppose, and it must be allowed to imply some want of art, that their

Joseph Warton.

Digitized by Google

power has not been sufficiently intermingled with the action. Other parts may likewise be charged with want of connection; the game at ombre might be spared; but if the lady had lost her hair while she was intent upon her cards, it might have been inferred that those who are too fond of play will be in danger of neglecting more important interests. These perhaps are faults, but what are such faults to so much excellence?—JOHNSON.

The Rape of the Lock at once placed Pope higher than any modern writer, and exceeded everything of the kind that had appeared in the republic of letters. Dr. Johnson truly says that it is the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all Pope's compositions. Indeed, upon this subject there cannot be two opinions. This poem is founded, however, upon local manners. And of all poems of that kind it is undoubtedly far the best, whether we consider the exquisite tone of raillery, a certain musical sweetness and suitableness in the versification, the management of the story, or the kind of fancy and airiness given to the whole. But what entitles it to its high claim of peculiar poetic excellences?—the powers of imagination, and the felicity of invention displayed in adopting, and most artfully conducting, a machinery so fanciful, so appropriate, so novel, and so poetical. The introduction of Discord, &c., as machinery in the Lutrin, &c., is not to be mentioned at the same time. Such a being as Discord will suit a hundred subjects; but the elegant, the airy sylph,

> Loose to the wind, whose airy garments flew,
> Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
> Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
> Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes:

such a being as this, is suited alone to the identical and peculiar poem in which it is employed. I will now go a step farther in appreciating the elegance and beauty of this poem, and I would ask the question, Let any other poet,—Dryden, Waller, Cowley, or Gray,—be assigned this subject, and this machinery: could they have produced a work altogether so correct and beautiful from the same given materials? Let us, however, still remember, that this poem is founded on local manners, and the employment of the sylphs is in artificial life. For this reason the poem must have a secondary rank, when considered strictly and truly with regard to its poetry. Whether Pope would have excelled as much in loftier subjects of a general nature, in the "high mood" of Lycidas, the rich colourings of Comus, and the magnificent descriptions and sublime images of Paradise Lost; or in painting the characters and employments of aerial beings,

> That tread the ooze of the salt deep,
> Or run upon the sharp wind of the north,

Digitized by Google

is another question. He has not attempted it: I have no doubt he would have failed. But to have produced a poem, infinitely the highest of its kind, and which no other poet could perhaps altogether have done so well, is surely very high praise. The excellence is Pope's own, the inferiority is in the subject. No one understood better that excellent rule of Horace:

> Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam
> Viribus.[1]—BOWLES.

From the statement of Pope in the edition of 1736, it would be inferred that the Rape of the Lock in its second form was prepared and published in 1712. As usual he ante-dated his work. The original sketch came out in 1712; the machinery was added in 1713, and the enlarged poem was not published till the spring of 1714. Warburton's narrative, which in some editions had Pope's initial affixed by an error of the press,[2] is in part derived from Pope, and the rest is erroneous. The person who bespoke the Rape of the Lock was not Mr. Secretary Caryll, but his nephew, the Sussex squire, and for years the correspondent of Pope. The assertion of Warburton, that Pope, when he wrote the work, was acquainted with his heroine, is discredited by his letter to Caryll on May 28, 1712. "Mr. Bedingfield," he there says, "has done me the favour to send some books of the Rape to my Lord Petre and Mrs. Fermor," and unless the poet had been a total stranger to them he would have presented the copies himself. The language of the motto can only bear the interpretation of Warburton, that the Rape of the Lock "was written or published at the lady's request," but Warburton ought to have seen that the motto was a deception. The piece was not *written* at Miss Fermor's request, for it was absurd to imagine that she would ask any one to compose a poem to allay her own resentment against Lord Petre, and there is the direct statement of Pope in the body of the work, and in his conversation with Spence, that the suggestion did not come from her.[3] The piece was not *published* at her request, for in the Dedication of the second edition to Miss

[1] In his Observations on the Poetic character of Pope, Bowles reiterates that the Rape of the Lock is "a composition to which it will be in vain to compare anything of the kind,—that it stands alone, unrivalled, and possibly never to be rivalled." "The Muse," he adds, "has no longer her great characteristic attributes, pathos or sublimity; but she appears so interesting that we almost doubt whether the garb of elegant refinement is not as captivating, as the most beautiful appearances of nature."

[2] "The small edition of Pope," writes Warburton to Hurd, June 30, 1753, "is the correctest of all; and I was willing you should always see the best of me." Warburton refers to his 12mo. ed. 1753, and in this corrected edition Pope's initial is omitted.

[3] Rape of the Lock, cant. i. ver. 3; Singer's Spence, p. 147.

Digitized by Google

Fermor, Pope says of the first edition, "An imperfect copy having been offered to a bookseller, you had the good nature for my sake to consent to the publication of one more correct. This I was forced to before I had executed half my design, for the machinery was entirely wanting to complete it." Warburton reversed the parts. The requester was Pope, and Miss Fermor gave a consent which it was vain to refuse when the sole alternative presented to her was whether the poem should be printed surreptitiously, or under the supervision of its author. The miserable farce of circulating copies of a work, and then alleging that the publication had become a necessary measure of self-defence, was one of those transparent pretences which deceived no one except the person who fancied that he was deceiving. Pope never wrote a line of the smallest value which was not intended for the printer.

The motto from Martial was doubtless attached to the Rape of the Lock in the belief that Miss Fermor would be proud to countenance the misrepresentation. The poet was mistaken. "A few years ago," says Dr. Johnson, "a niece of Mrs. Fermor, who presided in an English convent at Paris, mentioned Pope's work with very little gratitude, rather as an insult than an honour; and she may be supposed to have inherited the opinion of her family."[1] Pope told Spence that "nobody but Sir George Brown was angry," and Warburton says that Miss Fermor "took the poem so well as to give about copies of it," but we now know that Johnson was right in his inference. "Sir Plume blusters, I hear," wrote Pope to the younger Caryll, Nov. 8, 1712, five months after the Rape of the Lock appeared; "nay, the celebrated lady herself is offended, and, which is stranger, not at herself, but me. Is not this enough to make a writer never be tender of another's character or fame?" Respect for the fame and feelings of his heroine was not an act of grace; it was an imperious duty. At the request of a common friend he had composed a poem for an amiable purpose upon an incident of private life, and it would have been a hateful abuse of his commission, a slanderous violation of domestic sanctities, if he had penned a word which could sully the reputation of an innocent maiden. He is not free from reproach. Without intending to transgress he offended from inherent want of delicacy. He made Belinda the subject of some gross double meanings, which provoked the ribald comments of the critics, and, unless a morbid love of notoriety had extinguished feminine purity, she must have been deeply outraged by being associated with these licentious allusions. Her indignation may appear

[1] Johnson's Lives of the Poets, ed. Cunningham, vol. iii., p. 19; Boswell's Life of Johnson, 1 vol. ed., p. 462. Johnson's conversation with the Abbess took place in 1775. "She knew Pope, and thought him disagreeable."

Digitized by Google

to have come too late, for though her consent to the publication of the work, when there was no real choice, does not involve approval, she might, through her friends, have effectually demanded the suppression of degrading couplets. Her very resentment, however, when she read the work in print, is a presumption that they were not in the manuscript which was sent her, and indeed it is incredible that she, or her family, could ever have sanctioned such revolting personalities. They are a sad exhibition of the ingrained coarseness of Pope's taste,—of his incapacity to conceive the idea of womanly homage to outward decency, to say nothing of innate refinement and modesty.

In the interval between the first and second edition of the Rape of the Lock, Pope was compelled to acknowledge that he had inflicted an injury on Miss Fermor. "I have some thoughts," he wrote to Caryll, Dec. 15, 1713, "of dedicating the poem to her by name, as a piece of justice in return to the wrong interpretations she has suffered under on the score of that piece." He tried a preface "which salved the lady's honour without affixing her name," but she preferred the dedication. She wished to be dissociated from his heroine, and he propitiated her by saying, all the incidents are "fabulous except the loss of your hair; and the character of Belinda, as it is now managed, resembles you in nothing but beauty." "I believe," he wrote to Caryll, January 9, 1714, "I have managed the dedication so nicely that it can neither hurt the lady nor the author. I writ it very lately, and upon great deliberation. The young lady approves of it, and the best advice in the kingdom, of the men of sense, has been made use of in it, even to the treasurer's." Plainer understandings will be puzzled to discover what scope there could be for the "great deliberation" of the poet, and the advice of all the ablest men throughout the kingdom, including the prime minister, Lord Oxford, in making a simple declaration of a simple fact. To complete the absolution of Miss Fermor, Pope substituted another motto for the lines from Martial, and when their temporary withdrawal had answered his purpose he restored them in the quarto edition of his works.

A more celebrated feud, if we are to trust the account of Warburton, took its rise from the Rape of the Lock. The success of the first edition "encouraged the author to give it a more important air" by the addition of the supernatural machinery. "Full," says Warburton, "of this noble conception he communicated it to Mr. Addison, who he imagined would have been equally delighted with the improvement. On the contrary, he had the mortification to see his friend receive it coldly; and even to advise him against any alteration, for that the poem in its original state was a delicious little thing, and, as he expressed it, *merum sal*. Mr. Pope was shocked

Digitized by Google

for his friend, and then first began to open his eyes to his character."[1] The charge has been exposed by Johnson, Macaulay, and Croker. Mr. Croker denies that the machinery was a plausible suggestion. "I believe Addison's advice," he says, "to have been a sincere and just opinion, and such as I should have expected from the purity of his taste. The original poem tells the actual story and exhibits a picture of real manners with so much wit and poetry, but also with so much simplicity and clearness, that I can well imagine that Addison might be alarmed at the proposition of introducing sylphs and gnomes into a scene of common life already so admirably described. Even now, with the advantage of seeing all the brilliancy with which Pope has worked out what Addison thought an unfortunate conception, I will not deny that such is the charm of truth that I have lately read the first sketch with more interest, though certainly with less admiration than its more fanciful and more gorgeous successor, which really seems something like a beauty oppressed with the weight and splendour of her ornaments. The game at cards, the most ingenious and beautiful of all the additions, is only reality splendidly embellished, and would have been equally well placed in the first sketch." Macaulay vindicates the counsel of Addison upon a general principle, irrespective of the apparent want of fitness between supernatural agents and the frivolities of fashion,—a principle "the result of wide and long experience," which is, that a successful work of imagination is injured by being recast. "We cannot at this moment," he says, "call to mind a single instance in which this rule has been transgressed with happy effect, except the instance of the Rape of the Lock. Tasso recast his Jerusalem. Akenside recast his Pleasures of the Imagination, and his Epistle to Curio. Pope himself, emboldened no doubt by the success with which he had expanded and remodelled the Rape of the Lock, made the same experiment on the Dunciad. All these attempts failed. Who was to foresee that Pope would once in his life be able to do what he could not himself do twice, and what nobody else has ever done? Addison's advice was good, but if it had been bad, why should we pronounce it dishonest? Scott tells us that one of his best friends predicted the failure of Waverley. Herder adjured Goethe not to take so unpromising a subject as Faust. Hume tried to dissuade Robertson from writing the History of Charles the Fifth. Nay Pope himself was one of those who prophesied that Cato would never succeed on the stage, and advised Addison to print it without risking a representation.[2] But Scott, Goethe,

[1] Warburton's Pope, ed. 1760, vol. iv. p. 27.

[2] Pope's Poetical Works, ed. Elwin, vol. i. p. 327. Pope told Spence that he gave the advice, but this was a false pretence. He may have had a two-fold motive for the misrepresentation,—first, the wish to exalt his critical perspicacity,

Digitized by Google

Robertson, Addison, had the good sense and generosity to give their advisers credit for the best intentions. Pope's heart was not of the same kind with theirs."[1] Of the examples, which Macaulay quotes, of poems marred in the attempt to mend them, the Jerusalem of Tasso was the only one which existed in the days of Addison; and the Jerusalem was not a parallel case, for the mind of Tasso was diseased when he remodelled his work, and he yielded, against his judgment, to the cavils of critics instead of obeying the self-born calls of imagination. Most men nevertheless would instinctively recommend that whatever was beautiful should be let alone, lest it should be deteriorated in the effort to make it better. When Pope boasted that the adaptation of the new parts to the old, in the Rape of the Lock, was the greatest triumph of his skill, he himself confessed the risk and difficulty of the process, and justified the misgivings of Addison. But besides the general hazard, we should expect, with Mr. Croker, that Addison would have thought the particular project for improving the poem to be essentially bad. Pope had shown a predilection for heathen mythology, and his management of it had been clumsy and lifeless. His scheme would have called up to Addison's mind the interposition of the gods and goddesses in Homer and Virgil. The conjunction of these obsolete figments, under new names, with the trivialities of modern society, would have seemed incongruous and pedantic,[2] and the previous works of Pope would have compelled the conclusion that he had not the skill to deal with ethereal fiction. Addison could neither have divined from a conversational description how perfectly the agents would be adapted to their office, nor from Pope's existing poetry how delicious they would be rendered by the felicity of the execution. Unless there was the strongest presumption that the recommendation to leave the poem unaltered was made in good faith, we should not be warranted in believing the story, for no reliance could be placed on the unsupported testimony of Pope when he was safe from contradiction, and his object was to damage the reputation of a rival.

Pope is convicted on his own evidence. He admits that the incident "*first* opened his eyes to the character of Addison," and by

since it was then acknowledged that Cato was unfitted for the stage, and had owed its success to party passion; secondly, the desire of appearing to have adopted a manly tone towards Addison in the infancy of their acquaintance.

[1] Macaulay's Essays, 1 vol. ed., p. 717.

[2] "In mock heroic poems," said Addison, Spectator, No. 523, "the use of the heathen mythology is not only excusable but graceful, because it is the design of such compositions to divert by adapting the fabulous machines of the ancients to low subjects, and at the same time by ridiculing such kinds of machinery in modern writers." Pope's projected machinery was not to be burlesque, and did not come under Addison's exception.

Digitized by Google

consequence that Addison's conduct had been hitherto blameless. He thus bears witness against himself of his readiness to impute the basest motives upon the most trumpery pretexts. Being "*shocked*" at the moral turpitude of "his friend," he could never again have treated him with cordiality and confidence, and the alienation which ensued, must, on Pope's own showing, have had its origin in Pope's morbid suspicions. But there was an earlier transaction, which turns the tables with fatal force upon Pope. Anterior to the conversation on the Rape of the Lock,[1] he urged Lintot the bookseller to persuade Dennis to criticise Addison's Cato.[2] Dennis published his Remarks, and Pope followed with his anonymous pamphlet, Dr. Norris's Narrative of the Phrenzy of J. D.,—a coarse, dull production, consisting of nothing but low, intemperate abuse. Pope's device pointed to three results. He would damage the reputation of Addison's play; he would provoke him into turning his wrath upon Dennis; and he would secure an opening for venting his own spleen against the critic without seeming to be actuated by personal spite. Addison was disgusted with the pamphlet; and, ignorant probably of its parentage, he let Dennis know that he repudiated and condemned it.[3] The worst was to come. More than twenty years afterwards Pope dressed up a letter which he had written to Caryll, on the occasion of an attack in the Flying Post, and pretended that it had been written to Addison when his play was assailed by Dennis. In this fraudulent document Pope congratulates him on his share in "the envy and calumny, which is the portion of all good and great men," and declares that "he felt more warmth" at the Remarks on Cato than when he read the Reflections on the Essay on Criticism.[4] Having prompted the abuse,

[1] Warburton's Pope, vol. iv. p. 26.

[2] Dennis's Remarks on Pope's Rape of the Lock, preface, p. ix.; Dennis's Remarks upon the Dunciad, p. 41; Pope's Correspondence, ed. Elwin, vol. i. p. 398, note.

[3] Pope's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 400. The disclaimer of Addison is in a letter which he directed Steele to write to Lintot. Steele says that the pamphlet "was offered to be communicated" to Addison before it was published, and Dennis concluded that the offer came from Pope. It doubtless came from the bookseller, for Pope was anxious to preserve his incognito. He assured Cromwell and Caryll, that he was not the author, and to have avowed the satire would have betrayed his double-dealing to Lintot, and proclaimed to the public that the rancour towards Dennis was dictated by revenge. When the Narrative of Dennis's Frenzy was offered to Addison, he answered, that "he could not in honour and conscience be privy to such treatment, and was sorry to hear of it." If this reply was communicated to Pope, zeal for Addison could not be the motive for persevering in a publication which was thoroughly distasteful to him, let alone the absurdity of the supposition that Addison's interests could have weighed with the person who had instigated the attack. Accordingly, Pope in his pamphlet scoffed at Dennis, but did not reply to his criticisms upon Cato.

[4] Pope's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 398.

Digitized by Google

he published a fictitious letter to persuade the world that he had overflowed with generous indignation. He wanted posterity to believe that he had poured out these magnanimous sentiments to Addison, who returned him envy and malice. His object was to magnify his own virtues, and transfer his meanness and jealousy to the amiable genius he had formerly wronged. "Addison," he said, "was very kind to me at first, but my bitter enemy afterwards,"[1] and with the consciousness of guilt, he tried to conceal that he had forfeited the kindness by misconduct. He was bold with his forgeries and falsehoods in the confidence that a dead man could tell no tales. Happily there are flaws in the best-laid dishonest plots, and the hour of retribution comes at last. At what period or in what degree Addison himself detected Pope's practices is not definitely known, but he discovered enough to avoid him. "Leave him as soon as you can," he said to Lady Mary W. Montagu; "he will certainly play you some devilish trick else. He has an appetite to satire."

Up to the Rape of the Lock, Pope had only put borrowed thoughts into verse. He now broke out into originality, but not without some obligation to his predecessors. In one place De Quincey maintains that the Rape of the Lock was not suggested by the Lutrin, because Pope did not read French with ease to himself, and in another place that Voltaire must have been wrong in saying that "Pope could hardly read French," inasmuch as there are "numerous proofs that he had read Boileau with so much feeling of his peculiar merit that he has appropriated and naturalised some of his best passages."[2] The second statement of De Quincey was the latest and the truest. Pope refers to the Lutrin in his manuscript notes on the Remarks of Dennis, and certainly had it in his mind when he framed the scheme of his poem. "The treasurer," it is said, in the summary prefixed to Boileau's work, "is the highest dignitary in the chapter. The precentor is the second dignitary. In front of the seat of the latter there was formerly an enormous reading-desk, which almost concealed him. He had it removed, and the treasurer wanted to put it back. Hence arose the dispute which is the subject of the present poem." Boileau converted the squabble into a satire on the indolence, the sensuality, and pride of the cathedral clergy in the licentious reign of Louis XIV. Pope converted the quarrel between Miss Fermor and Lord Petre into a satire on the frivolities of a young lady of fashion from her morning toilet to the close of her giddy day. Boileau called the Lutrin a new species of burlesque, "because," he said, "in other burlesques Dido and Æneas speak like fishwomen and scavengers; here a barber and his wife speak like Dido and Æneas." Pope

[1] Spence, p. 85.
[2] Spence, p. 178.
[3] De Quincey's Works, vol. vii. p. 66; xv. p. 98.

Digitized by Google

adopted a similar vein, and invested the trifles of a gay and frivolous life with an adventitious importance. Boileau parodied some well-known passages of Virgil. Pope parodied both Virgil and Homer. The Lutrin opens with Discord appearing to the sleeping treasurer, and warning him against the encroachments of the rebellious precentor. The enlarged Rape of the Lock opens with Ariel appearing, in a dream, to Belinda, and beseeching her to beware of some disastrous impending event. The raillery on the foibles of women, which is the central idea in Pope's poem, was caught up from the exquisite pleasantry of Addison, who, in the Tatlers and Spectators, had endeavoured to laugh the fair sex out of their levities of behaviour, and extravagances of dress. Through his delicate humour, it had become the popular topic in the light literature of the day.

Johnson says of the sylphs that they are "a new race of beings," and that there is nothing "but the names of his agents which Pope has not invented." This is an exaggeration. The names were a considerable part of the novelty; for, in the fundamental conception, the sylphs in the Rape of the Lock were the time-honoured fairies of English literature. Their immediate prototypes are the elves of Shakespeare. The sprites of Pope belong to the same family with the diminutive, joyous, ethereal creatures which anciently crept into acorn cups, couched in the bells of cowslips, or lived under blossoms; who sported in air, rode on the curled clouds, and flitted with the swiftness of thought over land and sea; who hung dew-drops on flowers, fetched jewels from the deep, shaded sleeping eyes from moonbeams with wings plucked from painted butterflies, and who mingled, benignly or maliciously, in all but the graver varieties of human affairs. Pope acknowledges the ancestry of his newly-named race when Ariel,—whose own name confesses his parentage,—addressing his subjects, says,

> Ye sylphs and sylphids, to your chief give ear;
> Fays, fairies, genii, elves, and demons hear.

The benevolent and mischievous fairies of old days were, in their turn, little more than the good and evil angels dwarfed to suit their lighter functions. For the precise outward aspect which Pope assigned to the sylphs, he was beholden to Spenser, with whose works he was well acquainted:

> And all about her neck and shoulders flew
> A flock of little loves, and sports, and joys,
> With nimble wings of gold and purple hue,
> Whose shapes seemed not like to terrestial boys,
> But like to angels playing heav'nly toys.

These are just the beings who hover round Belinda. But though Johnson's claim for Pope is over-stated, his supernatural agents are

Digitized by Google

the product of genius. The vividness with which they are described, the novel offices they fulfil, the poetic beauty with which they are invested, even when engaged in employments not in their nature poetic, constitute them a distinct variety, and they rise up before our minds like a fresh creation, and not as the reflection of antecedent familiar forms. The remark is true of the work throughout. What Pope borrowed he varied, embellished, and combined in a manner which leaves the poem unique. Some of the parts may be traced to earlier sources, but few master-pieces have more originality in the aggregate.

"The Rape of the Lock," says De Quincey, "is the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers."[1] "The Rape of the Lock," says Hazlitt, "is the most exquisite specimen of filigree work ever invented. It is made of gauze and silver spangles. The most glittering appearance is given to everything — to paste, pomatum, billets-doux, and patches. Airs, languid airs, breathe around; the atmosphere is perfumed with affectation. A toilet is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the goddess of vanity, and the history of a silver bodkin is given with all the pomp of heraldry. No pains are spared, no profusion of ornament, no splendour of poetic diction to set off the meanest things. The balance between the concealed irony and the assumed gravity is as nicely trimmed as the balance of power in Europe. The little is made great and the great little. You hardly know whether to laugh or weep. It is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly. It is the perfection of the mock-heroic."[2] The world of fashion is displayed in its most gorgeous and attractive hues, and everywhere the emptiness is visible beneath the outward splendour. The beauty of Belinda, the details of her toilet, her troops of admirers, her progress up the Thames, the game at cards, the aerial escort which attend upon her, are all set forth with unrivalled grace and fascination, and all bear the impress of vanity and vexation. Nothing can exceed the art with which the satire is blended with the pomp, mocking without disturbing the unsubstantial gewgaw. The double vein is kept up with sustained skill in the picture of the outward charms and inward frivolity of women. Ariel, describing the influence of the sylphs upon them, says, that

> With varying vanities from ev'ry part,
> They shift the moving toy-shop of their heart.

This is the tone throughout. Their hearts are toy-shops. They reverse the relative importance of things, and, as Hazlitt says, the "little" with them "is great, and the great little." The Bible is

[1] De Quincey's Works, vol. xv. p. 116.
[2] Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Poets, 3rd ed., p. 140.

Digitized by Google

mixed up with "files of pins, puffs, powders, patches, billets-doux." Chastity and china, prayers and masquerades, love and jewellery are put upon a nominal equality, but with a manifest preponderance in favour of the china, masquerades, and jewellery. The female passion is for carriages, dress, cards, rank, and it is an insoluble mystery that "a belle should reject a lord." The "grave Clarissa," who rebukes the "airs and flights" of Belinda, can offer no higher motive for intermixing solid with trifling qualities than

> That *men* may say, when we the front-box grace,
> "Behold the first in virtue as in face!"

The continuous raillery against female foibles is playful in its poignancy. The whole wears a festive air, and has none of the ill-nature and venom which marked Pope's later satire.

In allotting their several functions to the sylphs, Ariel reserves Belinda's lap-dog for his own especial charge:

> Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

Dennis said it was "contrary to all manner of judgment and decorum" that the chief of the aerial train should be "only the keeper of a vile Iceland cur," instead of protecting "the lady's favourite lock."[1] Ruffhead repeated the futile objection.[2] "Black omens" announced that some misfortune would befall Belinda, but the precise calamity had been "wrapped by the fates in night." For aught Ariel knew, the attack might be directed against the favourite dog, which is neither "vile" nor "a cur" in Pope's poem, and which we may do Belinda the justice to believe was more precious in her eyes than even a favourite ringlet. She would rather have sacrificed her lock than her dog. Dennis from hostility, and Ruffhead from dullness, missed the meaning of the stroke. The climax of the omens which prefigured the coming disaster was that "Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind." The "shrieks" of the heroine, when the catastrophe arrived, were such as "when husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last." A gnome bent upon mischief made pampered lap-dogs ill, and bright eyes wept over them. The undue fondness for dogs and parrots, to the depreciation of the higher claims of humanity, was no uncommon failing, and Pope's design was to ridicule it. Locks of hair did not usurp the same supreme dominion, and Ariel, ignorant where the danger would light, is properly represented as guarding the pet dog, which had the first place in the affections of heartless women of fashion.

To the distempered mind of Dennis the sylphs appeared an absurd

[1] Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, p. 27.
[2] Ruffhead's Life of Pope, p. 113.

Digitized by Google

excrescence. "They neither promote," he says, "nor retard the danger of Belinda."[1] Johnson admits the force of the observation, and thinks it "implies some want of art that their power has not been sufficiently intermingled with the action." The criticism seems hasty. The sylphs have a large share in the fascination of Belinda. Their province is to heighten and protect her charms,—to preside at her toilet, to imprison essences, to save the powder from too rude a gale, to steal washes from the rainbow, to assist her blushes, and inspire her airs. They perform these offices up to the fatal moment, and are not an incumbrance to the narrative merely because they cannot avert the final stroke. Nay, their impotence to stay the crisis is in keeping with the general spirit of the poem. Belinda leads a life of vanity, and the sylphs are the ministers of vanity. They are lustrous with a butterfly beauty, the patrons of ephemeral folly, and it would be inconsistent with the moral if they could have ensured a perpetual triumph to weaknesses which inevitably terminate in mortification. Pope accounts for the failure of the watchful legion to turn aside the catastrophe. Ariel recognises that his power is gone when he perceives "an earthly lover lurking at Belinda's heart,"—an intimation, perhaps, that lovers are headstrong and incapable of guidance. Johnson asserts, and with as little reason, that the game of cards, like the machinery, has no connection with the subject of the poem. That subject is the exaltation of a beautiful young lady throughout a day of glittering fashion, till the hollow pomp ends in humiliation, anger, and tears. Whatever amusements and pageantry entered into a day of the kind belonged directly to the theme, provided they could be made subservient to poetic effect.

When Ariel, baffled and weeping, is compelled to resign his charge, the gnomes rush upon the scene, and retain their ascendancy till near the end. They are but slightly sketched, and all we hear of the appearance they present is that they have "a dusky, melancholy" aspect, and "sooty pinions." Their functions are the opposite to those of the sylphs,—they give lap-dogs diseases, discompose head-dresses, raise pimples on beauteous faces, engender pride, and spoil graces. Dennis detected a flaw. Umbriel descends to the Cave of Spleen, and procures from the goddess a bag filled with the impetuous, and a phial with the depressing passions. The gnome empties the bag of "sighs, sobs, and the war of tongues" on Belinda, who immediately "burns with more than mortal ire." The gnome next breaks over her the phial of "fainting fears and soft sorrows," when she exchanges her expression of rage for "eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears. "Now," says Dennis, "what could be more useless, whether we look upon the bag or the bottle?"[2] Without any

[1] Dennis's Remarks, p. 24. [2] Dennis's Remarks, p. 40.

Digitized by Google

assistance from the contents of the bag the "livid lightning had flashed from Belinda's eyes," and she had "rent the affrighted skies with her screams of horror." Without any assistance from the bottle she was found, on the gnome's return, sunk in the arms of a friend, "her hair unbound, and her eyes dejected." Pope replied on the margin of his copy of Dennis's pamphlet, that Juno in the Æneid summons Alecto from the infernal regions to stir up Amata, who was already burning with anger. This was no answer if the cases had been parallel, which they were not, for Amata's anger was only a passive irritation, and Alecto was sent to goad her into active fury. A few words would have obviated the criticism of Dennis, but the Cave of Spleen would still be out of place. The personifications of ill-nature, affectation, and diseased fancies are literal descriptions of men and women transferred from the surface of the globe to a pretended world at its centre. Where no invention is displayed, where there is nothing to gratify and beguile the imagination, the departure from fact is distasteful to the mind. Instead of copying classic fables, unsuited to modern times, Pope might have exhibited the inhabitants of his Cave of Spleen in the midst of that society to which they belonged, and ascribed their repulsive qualities to the instigation of the gnomes. These rather nugatory beings would have gained in importance, and the pictures of the peevish, the affected, and the splenetic would have gained in force and truth.

Dennis justly found fault with particular passages, which are equally false to social usages, and the general conception of the poem. The exultation of Belinda at winning a game of cards takes the form of "shouts which fill the sky," and which are echoed back from "the woods and long canals." The impertinence of the baron in cutting off her curl required a strong expression of indignation, but not that "the affrighted skies should be rent with screams of horror." At the conclusion of the battle, which in some of its incidents is a mere vulgar brawl, Belinda again manifests her stentorian propensities by "roaring in a louder strain than fierce Othello." There is no affinity between Belinda gentle, graceful, and captivating, and Belinda shouting, screaming, and roaring. Pope called his poem "heroi-comical," and it is evident that he attached different meanings to the word. It was "heroi-comical" to bring supernatural machinery to bear upon common-place life, and surround the toilet and card-table with a fairy brilliancy. It was equally "heroi-comical" to give vent to the ebullitions of tragic or jovial frenzy on trivial occasions. The first species of the "heroi-comical" lent a borrowed splendour to its objects; the second species was burlesque, and reduced the heroine in her angry moods, to the level of a coarse, plebeian termagant, and in her joyous moments to that of an unmannerly, low-bred romp. The two species of the "heroi-comical" could not be applied to the

Digitized by Google

same person without jarring discordance, and fortunately the burlesque and disenchanting element is only sparingly introduced.

"The Rape of the Lock," said Dennis, "is an empty trifle, which cannot have a moral." The Lutrin, he maintains, on the contrary, is "an important satirical poem upon the luxury, pride, and animosities of the *popish clergy*, and the moral is, that when christians, and especially the *clergy*, run into great heats about *religious* trifles, their animosity proceeds from the want of that *religion* which is the pretence of their quarrel."[1] Pope erased the epithet "religious," and substituting "female sex" for "popish clergy," "ladies" for "clergy," and "sense" for "religion," claimed the description for the Rape of the Lock. Dennis quotes some lines in which Boileau, he says, gives "broad hints of his real meaning," and Pope writes on the margin the words, "Clarissa's speech,"—a speech which is more definite than any of the hints in the Lutrin. In delicious verse Clarissa dwells on the transitory power of a handsome face, insists on the superior influence of good humour, and concludes with the couplet,—

> Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll!
> Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.

The moral here summed up pervades the poem, which is a continuous satire on a tinsel existence. The injunction to be sweet-tempered is indignantly rejected by Belinda, for the piece was professedly founded on a subsisting feud, but the common sense of the admonitions shames the folly which rejects them. Dennis undertook an impossible task when he laboured to demonstrate the superiority of Boileau. The Lutrin is stilted, extravagant, and prosaic by the side of the Rape of the Lock.

Dennis's pamphlet against the Rape of the Lock consisted of seven letters and a preface. Of four of these letters, Pope has written, in his copy, sarcastic summaries, which throw no light on his poem, but which betray by their exaggeration, his soreness at the criticisms. Letter 1. "Proving that Boileau did not call his Lutrin, Poeme Héroi-Comique, that Bossu does not say [anything of] the machines, and that Butler [wrote][2] the notes to his own Hudibras." Letter 2. "Mr. Dennis's positive word that the Rape of the Lock *can* be nothing but a trifle, and that the Lutrin cannot be so, however it may appear." Letter 3. "Where it appears to demonstration that no handsome lady ought to dress herself, and no modest one to cry out or be angry." Letter 5. "Showeth that the Rosicrucian doctrine is not the christian, and that Callimachus and Catullus were a couple of fools." Catullus and Callimachus are

[1] Dennis's Remarks, p. 8, 9.

[2] A fragment of Pope's writing has been cut away by the binder, and the words in brackets are conjectural.

Digitized by Google

not mentioned by Dennis. He had only condemned a passage in Pope which was imitated from these poets. In the third letter Dennis said nothing against handsome women dressing themselves, or against modest women crying out, but maintained that simplicity of dress was more becoming than lavish adornments, and that "well-bred ladies," when joyful or angry, did not fill the skies and surrounding country with their shoutings and roarings. In the first letter the note of some commentator on Hudibras was ascribed by Dennis to Butler, and in the second letter he asserted that Boileau showed more judgment in styling the Lutrin an "heroic poem" than did Pope in terming the Rape of the Lock "heroi-comical." Dennis was not aware that Boileau in 1709 had replaced "héroique" by "héroi-comique," and that the English poet borrowed the epithet from his French precursor. Pope's manuscript annotations are not behind Dennis's text in petty cavils. The combatants were both too angry to be candid; or if Dennis shows candour, it is in his undisguised disregard of it. He fulminated against Pope for calling the objects of his dislike "fool, dunce, blockhead, scoundrel." "Nothing," he continues, "incapacitates a man so much for using foul language as good sense, good-nature, and good-breeding; and nothing qualifies a man more for it than his being a clown, a fool, and a barbarian." Therefore, said he, "I shall call A. P—E neither fool nor dunce, nor blockhead; but I shall prove that he is all these in a most egregious manner."[1] For boasting a virtue in the act of violating it Dennis had no competitor.

Wordsworth, writing to Mr Dyce says, "Pope, in that production of his boyhood, the Ode to Solitude, and in his Essay on Criticism, has furnished proofs that at one period of his life he felt the charm of a sober and subdued style, which he afterwards abandoned for one that is, to my taste at least, too pointed and ambitious, and for a versification too timidly balanced."[2] Southey and Coleridge accused Pope of debasing the public taste, but they agreed in laying the blame on his "meretricious" Homer, and excepted from their condemnation works which Wordsworth included in his censure. "The mischief," says Southey, "was effected not by Pope's satirical and moral pieces, for these entitle him to the highest place among poets of his class; it was by his Homer. No other work in the language so greatly vitiated the diction of English poetry."[3] "In the course of one of my lectures," says Coleridge, "I had occasion to point out the almost faultless position and choice of words in Pope's original compositions, particularly in his Satires, and Moral Essays, for the

[1] Dennis's Remarks, Preface, p. v. vii.
[2] Memoirs of Wordsworth, vol. ii. p. 221.
[3] Cowper's Works, ed. Southey, 1854, vol. i. p. 313.

Digitized by Google

purpose of comparing them with his translation of Homer, which I do not stand alone in regarding as the main source of our pseudo-poetic diction."[1] Wordsworth loved simplicity of composition, and language not ornate. His preference for the Essay on Criticism would be intelligible if the piece had been free from adorned passages, and the strained attempt to be pointed in some of the similes; or if the style, in the quieter passages, had been consummate of its kind. Cowper has described the qualities which are essential to the highest excellence in this species of poetry. "Every man," he says, "conversant with verse-making, knows by painful experience that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic, to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake."[2] Pope, in his Essay on Criticism, did not reach Cowper's standard, and far happier specimens of the style will be found in some of his Satires.

The Rape of the Lock greatly surpasses in execution the Essay on Criticism; and austere, indeed, must be the taste which could condemn it. The "position of the words" is not always "faultless," for Pope admitted too many of his usual inversions, but the phraseology is beautiful in itself, and exquisitely adapted to the subject. The language, simple in its units, is rich in combination, without ever being florid or profuse. The poet had to depict empty glories made up of outward pageantry, and as rainbows cannot be painted with grey, so Pope dipped his pen in the glowing colours which represented the things. He could not have employed his radiant tints with greater delicacy and power. Few as are the details, the scenic effect is complete. He displayed his judgment in eschewing minuteness which would have been tedious and prosaic; the frail, superficial show could only be imposing in a general view. The pointed lines which offended Wordsworth, are not more numerous than befit the theme. A certain sparkle of style accorded best with the glitter of the world described. Dennis denounced the "puns." He said, "they shocked the rules of true pleasantry, and bore the same proportion to thought which bubbles held to bodies."[3] Two or three of the double-meanings are offensive from that grossness which is the single serious flaw in the brilliant gem. The few which remain are legitimate in a lively poem, when thus sparingly introduced. Nor

[1] Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, ed. 1847, vol. i. p. 39.
[2] Cowper's Works, vol. ii. p. 399.
[3] Dennis's Remarks, p. 33, 47.

Digitized by Google

are they common puns, but words used at once in their literal and metaphorical sense :

> Or stain her honour or her new brocade.
> Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball.
> He first the snuff-box opened then the case.

Johnson has pointed out that Denham's verses on the Thames, "O! could I flow like thee," are marked by the same property, and no one would call them punning lines.[1]

The enlarged edition of the Rape of the Lock had a rapid popularity. "It has in four days' time," wrote Pope to Caryll, March 12, 1714, "sold to the number of three thousand, and is already reprinted." "The sylphs and the gnomes," says Tyers, "were the deities of the day." Much of the relish, with the herd of readers, has passed away with the novelty. "Of the Rape of the Lock," says Professor Reed, "I acknowledge my inability of admiration,"[2] and numbers who admire would qualify the superlative language of De Quincey, Hazlitt, and Bowles. The conventional elegancies of a particular class do not appeal to universal sympathy. Many persons can enter no better into the fanciful beauty which is thrown around routine trivialities. The facts with them are too strong to admit of fiction. To these inaptitudes it must be added that the subtle delicacies of humour, satire, language, and invention, which mingle largely with the obvious beauties of the Rape of the Lock, can only be perceived when the taste has been quickened by the early culture of letters. De Quincey remarks that, with all orders of men, the elementary passions and principles are easiest understood, for the seeds of them are sown in every mind, and Milton and Shakespeare speak to understandings which are impervious to the refined and airy graces of Pope's artificial world.[4]

A few have gone into the opposite extreme, and placed Pope on a level with Shakespeare and Milton themselves. His strongest claim to the distinction is the Rape of the Lock, but wide is the interval, whether the test is character, passions, manners, descriptions, or machinery. The characters in Pope's poem are slight and superficial. There is a miniature sketch of an empty-headed fop, and an outside view of a beautiful young lady fond of dress, amusements, and admiration; the rest of the human personages are shadows. Passions, says Bowles, are the soul of poetry, and in poetry of the highest order they are grand, terrible, pathetic, or lovely; the grovel-

[1] Lives of the Poets, vol. i. p. 74.
[2] Historical Rhapsody on Mr. Pope, 2nd ed., p. 89.
[3] Lectures on the British Poets, by Henry Reed. Philadelphia, 1857, vol. i. p. 314.
[4] De Quincey's Works, vol. xii. p. 17.

Digitized by Google

ling, ludicrous, and trivial passions are of a less poetical species. The passions of Belinda belong to this lower class. Her grief and anger at the loss of her curl are professedly mock-heroic. They are disproportioned to the frivolous cause, and neither kindle, nor are meant to kindle, sympathy. The manners are not the index to inner depths,—the outward expression of the noble, the awful, or the tender. They are an exterior varnish, the mere formalities of fashion. The descriptions, apart from the sylphs, are chiefly of the toilet, the card-table, and such-like things, which have no kin-ship with the strong, abiding emotions. The very sylphs, by their employments, are, poetically, of an inferior race to the fairies who met

> on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
> By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
> Or on the beached margin of the sea,
> To dance their ringlets to the whistling wind.[1]

The beings who luxuriate in the everlasting beauties of nature have a deeper charm for us than creatures whose chief delight is in the little artifices of a woman's toilet. The skill is exquisite by which the ephemeral nothings of gay fashion are coloured with the hues of poetic fancy, but in spite of the brilliancy they remain nothings still, and cannot compete with strains which are struck from the profoundest chords in the heart and mind of man. Lord Byron, to save the supremacy of Pope, asserted that "the poet is always ranked according to his execution."[2] Bowles maintained that the test of poetical excellence was the subject and execution combined.[3] He admitted that the loftiest theme in feeble hands would be eclipsed by insignificant topics when treated by a master, but he said that no genius could render subordinate topics equal in poetry to the highest where the execution, as in Shakespeare and Milton, was worthy of the subject. Lord Byron stultified himself. He had no sooner completed his proof that execution was the sole criterion of poetry, than he went on to argue that "the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth."[4] His paradox did not deserve a reply, even if he had not contradicted it the moment it was uttered. Hume wisely recommended that words should not be wasted upon theories which it is inconceivable that any human being could believe.

In his Observations on the Poetry of Pope, Bowles put the modes and incidents of artificial life the secondary passions, and descrip-

[1] Midsummer Night's Dream, Act ii. sc. 1.
[2] Moore's Life of Byron, 1 vol. ed., p. 695.
[3] Bowles's Pope, vol. x. p. 364.
[4] Moore's Life of Byron, p. 696.

Digitized by Google

tions of outward objects in a lower grade than the development of the impressive passions.[1] What he said of manners and passions was suppressed by Campbell, who based his reply upon his own misstatements, and proceeded to protest against "trying Pope exclusively by his powers of describing inanimate phenomena."[2] No one could be more emphatic than Bowles in placing souls before things. Of "inanimate phenomena," he had said that "all images drawn from what is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature, are more beautiful and sublime than any images drawn from art." Again, his antagonists misrepresented him, and arguing as though he had asserted that all images drawn from nature were beautiful, and that there was no beauty in any image drawn from art, they imagined they refuted him by adducing natural objects which were unsightly, and artificial objects which were the reverse. The canal at Venice, without the buildings and gondolas "would be nothing," said Lord Byron, "but a clay-coloured ditch."[3] The illustration did not touch the position of Bowles, who had never pretended that the ugly in nature eclipsed the beautiful in art. His principle was that, beauty for beauty, Solomon in the richest products of the loom was not arrayed like the flowers of the field. Campbell did not reason better than Byron. He selected the launching of a ship of the line for an instance of the sublime. Admitting, what nobody could deny, that his ship was poetical, it did not follow that the wooden structure had the grandeur of the ocean. His language was a virtual confession that it was inferior. He endowed his "vast bulwark" with attributes borrowed from nature, human and inanimate. He thought "of the stormy element on which the vessel was soon to ride, of the days of battle and nights of danger she had to encounter, of the ends of the earth which she had to visit, of all that she had to do and suffer for her country." He found the sublimity, not in the ship, but in the associations,—in the stormy waves of the mighty deep which was to be her home; in the terrors of darkness when she was tempest-driven; in the vast distances she had to traverse; in the perils and patriotism of the crew; in the fierce heroic contention of the battle. Campbell was self-refuted. He fell into the same error with respect to some fragments he quoted from the poets. Images derived from nature and art were mixed together, and he did not perceive that the passages owed their principal beauty to the nature. The fallacies of disputants who wrote without thinking were easily exposed, and Bowles got a signal victory over the whole of his numerous opponents.

Many a work of man, like the ship, impresses us less by its intrinsic

[1] Bowles's Pope, vol. x. p. 363; Bowles's Letters to Campbell, 2nd ed., p. 22
[2] Campbell's Specimens of British Poets, 1 vol. ed., p. lxxxvii.
[3] Moore's Life of Byron, p. 693.

Digitized by Google

qualities than by the train of ideas it suggests. Until the errors of controversialists called for fuller explanations Bowles did not draw the distinction, and Lord Byron was misled by overlooking it. "The Parthenon," he said, "is more poetical than the rock on which it stands."[1] "Not," replied Hazlitt, "because it is a work of art, but because it is a work of art o'erthrown."[2] Prostrate and broken columns, rent walls, and mouldering stone, exercise a more potent sway over the feelings than temples in the freshness of their artistic beauty. Hazlitt tells the obvious cause. Relics of departed glory, dilapidated monuments of intellectual splendour, are mementos of the fate which awaits the proudest works of man. With the thoughts of mighty reverses mingle the reflections which are always engendered by antiquity. The imagination reverts to shadowy, remote generations, to a people and power long ago laid in dust, and the ruins have a pathos which is the result of the centuries that have swept over them,—of the mysteries, vicissitudes, and havoc of time. When Lord Byron asked if there was an image in Gray's Elegy more striking than his "shapeless sculptures," his own question might have revealed the truth to him.[3] Whatever poetry may be embodied in the matchless art of Greece, there can be none in the "shapeless sculptures" of country tomb-stones; but they are memorials set up by poor cottagers to protect the bones of kindred from insult, and the whole force of the phrase in the Elegy arises from the prominence given to the tenderness and affection of which "the shapeless sculptures" are the symbols. The emotion is extrinsic to the rude, prosaic, and often ludicrous art. The same image becomes poetical or unpoetical according to the associations with which it is linked. The rusting, disused needles of Cowper's Mary, stricken by paralysis, are associated, Byron says, "with the darning of stockings, the hemming of shirts, and the mending of breeches."[4] This is the ordinary, mechanic association, and had it been the association called up by Cowper's lines they would not have been, what Byron pronounced them, "eminently poetical and pathetic." The associations are of another kind. The thousands who have shed tears over the lines to Mary did not pay a tribute to the needles, or the uses to which the needles were applied. They were melted by the representation—true and strong as the living facts—of love, of decay, of desolation, and of anguish. The different aspect of the same incident through the influence of association is exemplified in the description of the tea in the Rape of the Lock, and in the Task. The passage of Pope is not united to any sentiment, and only pleases

[1] Moore's Life of Byron, p. 693.
[2] Lectures on the English Poets, p. 889.
[3] Moore's Life of Byron, p. 694.
[4] Moore's Life of Byron, p. 697.

Digitized by Google

from the elegance of the verse and language. Cowper sets the heart in a glow with the delicious picture he presents of "fire-side enjoyments, and home-born happiness."

Out-door nature, and the imposing or beautiful passions, were not "the haunt and main region of Pope's song," and Bowles, after saying that the representation of nature demanded a susceptible heart, and an observing eye, goes on to state that "the weak eyes and tottering strength" of Pope were the reason that he seldom excelled in depicting natural appearances. His legs would not serve him to walk nor his eyes to see, and he was limited to the particulars which "could be gained by books, or suggested by imagination." "From his infirmities," Bowles continues, "he must have been chiefly conversant with artificial life, but if he had been gifted with the same powers of observing outward nature, I have no doubt he would have evinced as much accuracy in describing the appropriate and peculiar beauties such as nature exhibits in the Forest where he lived, as he was able to describe in a manner so novel, and with colours so vivid, a game of cards."[1] The premises are erroneous. Pope's vision was not bad; his eyes, says Warburton, were "fine, sharp, and piercing;"[2] and though he was too feeble for long walks, he could, and did, ramble through woods and meadows, and along the banks of streams. Nine-tenths of the finest descriptions from nature in the poets are of sights and sounds which were within the range of his common experience. The decision of Bowles must be reversed, and we must ascribe the little nature in Pope's works to his want of mental "susceptibility," and not to physical infirmity. His love of the country was the cursory admiration which is seldom wanting. He had none of the exceptional enthusiasm which could lead him to revel in nature, to scrutinise it, and enrich his mind with its memories. His strongest sympathies and antipathies were directed to the society of his day,—to the men who praised or abused, caressed or defied him.

The object of Bowles in setting forth his critical principles, was not to condemn descriptions of artificial life or images taken from art, but to single out the circumstances which render one class of poetry more exalted than another. The bulk of Pope's works were satirical and didactic: and the affinity to the highest species of poetry in the Rape of the Lock, and the Epistle of Eloisa, was not so complete as to place him on a level with the mightiest masters Warton and Bowles united in ranking him before Dryden and next to Milton.[3] Johnson doubtfully, and Cowper unhesitatingly, put

[1] Bowles's Pope, vol. x. p. 371.

[2] Warburton's Pope, vol. iv. p. 16.

[3] Warton's Essay on the Genius of Pope, 5th ed., vol. ii. p. 404; Bowles's Letters to T. Campbell, 2nd ed., p. 28.

Digitized by Google

Dryden before him.[1] Cowper states that he had "known persons of taste and discernment who would not allow that Pope was a poet at all," and the language of some writers implies that his claim to be called a poet was a serious moot-point with critics. Johnson gravely replied to the question "whether Pope was a poet," and Hazlitt said in 1818, that it was "a question which had hardly yet been settled."[2] Who the sceptics were does not appear, and it is probable that the opinion was never maintained by a single person of reputation. Pope was placed higher by Warton and Bowles, who were accused of depreciating, than by Johnson who defended him. Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge had "an antipathy to him," according to Byron;[3] but this was a false charge, originating in his own antipathy to Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. They all admitted that Pope had a brilliant poetical genius, and that many of his poems were of extraordinary excellence. Wordsworth, the one perhaps of the three who held him the cheapest, said he was "a man most highly gifted, who unluckily took to the plain when the heights were within his reach." Yet, while thinking that his poetry was not of the most poetical kind "he committed much of him to memory," acknowledged that "he succeeded as far as he went," and in mentioning the persons, dramatists omitted, who were the representatives of the "poetic genius of England," he specially named "Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope."[4] The real Pope controversy was with the zealots who maintained that he was of the same flight with Shakespeare and Milton. Their lofty estimate of his comparative excellence, did not arise from their keener appreciation of his merits; they were simply men of cold, unimaginative minds, who were insensible to merits which were greater still.

"Pope," said Hazlitt, "had none of the enthusiasm of poetry; he was in poetry what the sceptic is in religion."[5] This was a creed he sometimes avowed. "Poetry and criticism," he said in the preface to his works, "are only the affair of idle men who write in their closets, and of idle men who read there."[6] He talked later of his "idle songs," but in the same breath, with characteristic inconsistency, he set up to be the moral reformer of his age, and had undertaken a little before "to vindicate" in verse "the ways of God to man."[7] His views of his art are contradictory and irrecon-

[1] Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. iii. p. 116; Cowper to Unwin, Jan. 5, 1782.

[2] Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. iii. p. 137; Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Poets, p. 133.

[3] Byron's Works, 1 vol. ed., p. 804.

[4] Memoirs of Wordsworth, vol. ii. p. 215, 225, 470.

[5] Lectures on the English Poets, p. 137.

[6] Pope's Poetical Works, vol. i. p. 4.

[7] Prologue to the Satires, ver. 28, 342; Essay on Man, Ep. i. ver. 16.

Digitized by Google

cileable. His disparagement of it was an affectation founded upon a common definition of poetry, that its end was to please. The premise, false from its incompleteness, led to degrading conclusions. Hurd, who studied poetry for the purpose of analysing its ingredients, and who should have known its true properties, adopted the usual pleasure theory, and at thirty-seven he was naturally ashamed of his frivolous pursuit. "He must not," he said, "pass more of his life in these flowery regions; the light food was not the proper nourishment of age." Verse was the amusement of youth, and unless very sparingly used, was unbecoming the gravity of mature minds.[1] Milton had another conception of the office of poetry, and he avowed that his purpose was "to inbreed and cherish in a great people whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave." Wordsworth was of Milton's school. His aim was, "to make men wiser, better, and happier." "Every great poet," he said, "is a teacher; I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing."[2] The right doctrine was enforced by a critic whom Pope despised. "Poetry," wrote Dennis, "has two ends,—a subordinate and a final one: the subordinate one is pleasure, and the final one is instruction."[3] He had the sanction of Lord Bacon, who declared that "poesy" had three uses, of which two were to inculcate morality and heroism; the third alone was for "delectation."[4] Aristotle long before had contended that poetry was a more effective school of virtue than philosophy, and Horace avowed his conviction that right and wrong were taught better by Homer than by the sages. The least reflection upon the range of the noblest poetry must satisfy anybody that entertainment is its smallest function. The poet has the world of external things from which to cull his pictures. He gives definiteness to what was vague, fixes what was transitory, detects delightful resemblances, and brings to view unnoticed beauties. He invests the realities with the thoughts of his impassioned mind, creating in us sentiments, and supplying us with associations which we should not have derived from the actual objects. Nature, in itself enchanting, has meanings for us which were never dreamt of till we saw it through the medium of the poet's representations. He has the world of mankind for his province. He can take us the circuit of the passions; he can summon them from the inner recesses of the

[1] Hurd's Horace, 5th ed., vol. iii. p. 148.

[2] Memoirs of Wordsworth, vol. i. p. 339, 342.

[3] The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, chap. 3.

[4] Advancement of Learning, ed. Montagu, p. 127. A sentence from the passage is quoted by Hurd, who concludes that "pleasure in the idea of Lord Bacon is the ultimate and appropriate end of poetry." Hurd could not have looked into the original, and must have been deceived by trusting to second-hand extracts.

Digitized by Google

soul, and set them in open array; he can assign to each its rightful force, stripping corruption of its disguises, and displaying what is lovely in its unadulterated lustre. He can soar at pleasure into loftier regions, and when his main theme lies in a lower sphere can link it, openly or by implication, to the world of spirits,—to the divinity and the divine. Verse abounds in the strains which lift the soul to heaven, or bring down heaven to glorify earth, and sustain its weakness and woes. In a word, the poet treats of nature, man, the superhuman, and treats of them in a way which dilates our faculties and feelings, till through the contemplation of the ideal we attain to a grander real. "Poesy," says Lord Bacon, "was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things."[1] The domain of high poetry is the sublime, the solemn, the terrible, the pathetic, the tender, the sweet, and the tranquil; the office of poetry is to purify, to ennoble, to humanise, to soften, to soothe, and to delight. Poetry is great, and participates of divineness in proportion as it employs these means, and attains these ends. The dry unprofitable seeds which lurk in the heart, are by poetry quickened into a resplendent growth. Through poetry, obscure vestiges of truth start into distinctness, and flash upon the inward eye. Through poetry, the ethereal elements of the mind, incessantly dissipated and deadened by common concerns, are renewed in their sanctity. In the reach and importance of the lessons no hard prosaic facts can go beyond exalted poetry. The lesser kinds have their lesser uses, and chiefly in this that they are often more attractive in youth than healthier inspirations, and prepare the way for them. Wordsworth, in his boyhood, was entranced by the false glitter of famous poems which in his manhood seemed to him "dead as a theatre fresh emptied of spectators."[2] Thrown aside when they had served their purpose, they were the initial sparks which kindled a spirit that took precedence even of Milton in the depth and compass of thoughts and feelings almost deserving the name of revelations.

[1] Advancement of Learning, p. 127.
[2] The Recluse, Book v.

Digitized by Google

TO MRS.[1] ARABELLA FERMOR.

MADAM,

It will be in vain to deny that I have some regard for this piece, since I dedicate it to you. Yet you may bear me witness, it was intended only to divert a few young ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. But as it was communicated with the air of a secret, it soon found its way into the world. An imperfect copy having been offered to a bookseller, you had the good-nature, for my sake, to consent to the publication of one more correct. This I was forced to, before I had executed half my design, for the machinery was entirely wanting to complete it.

The machinery, Madam, is a term invented by the critics, to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons, are made to act in a poem. For the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies, let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These machines I determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits.

I know how disagreeable it is to make use of hard words before a lady; but it is so much the concern of a poet to have his works understood, and particularly by your sex, that you must give me leave to explain two or three difficult terms.[2]

[1] The title of Mrs. continued in Pope's early time to be applied indifferently to all grown up ladies, whether married or single. The contracted form Miss was appropriated to young girls, and women of loose character.

[2] Pope never, I think, is so unsuccessful as when he is writing to the ladies. He talks of the impropriety of using hard words before a lady. He must bring "her acquainted with the Rosicrucians," and explain what is meant by "machinery." This is done with such an air of conceited superiority, and of affected condescension, that it appears to me as pedantic as the pedantry he pretended to despise. The latter part of the epistle is certainly urbane, elegant and unaffected.—BOWLES.

Digitized by Google

The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book, called Le Comte de Gabalis, which both in its title and size is so like a novel, that many of the fair sex have read it for one by mistake. According to these gentlemen the four elements are inhabited by spirits, which they call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs, and salamanders. The gnomes or demons of earth delight in mischief; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity.

As to the following cantos, all the passages of them are as fabulous, as the vision at the beginning, or the transformation at the end, except the loss of your hair, which I always mention with reverence. The human persons are as fictitious as the airy ones; and the character of Belinda, as it is now managed, resembles you in nothing but in beauty.

If this poem had as many graces as there are in your person, or in your mind, yet I could never hope it should pass through the world half so uncensured as you have done. But let its fortune be what it will, mine is happy enough, to have given me this occasion of assuring you that I am, with the truest esteem,

Madam,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

A. Pope.

Digitized by Google

THE

RAPE OF THE LOCK.

CANTO I.

WHAT dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to Caryll,[1] Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:[2]
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.[3]
Say what strange motive, goddess! could compel[4]
A well-bred lord[5] t' assault a gentle belle?

[1] C—— or C——l in all the impressions which appeared in Pope's lifetime. "In this more solemn edition," Pope wrote to Caryll, Feb. 25, 1714, when the poem was about to be published in its enlarged shape, "I was strangely tempted to have set your name at length, as well as I have my own; but I remembered the desire you formerly expressed to the contrary, besides that it may better become me to appear as the offerer of an ill present, than you as the receiver of it."

[2] Roscommon in his Essay:

Or Gallus song, so tender and so true,
As e'en Lycoris might with pity view.—
WAKEFIELD.

[3] This is formed from Virgil, Geor. iv. 6. Sedley's version of the passage imitated:

The subject's humble, but not so the praise,
If any muse assists the poet's lays.

Dryden's Translation:

Slight is the subject, but the praise not small
If heav'n assist, and Phœbus hear my call.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] "*Compel*," says Dennis, "is a botch for the sake of the rhyme. The word that should naturally have been used was either *induce* or *provoke*." *Impel* would have fitted both the rhyme and the sense.

[5] "Belinda was Mrs. Arabella Fermor; the Baron was Lord Petre, of small stature, who soon after married a great heiress, Mrs. Warmsley, and died, leaving a posthumous son; Thalestris was Mrs. Morley; Sir Plume was her brother, Sir George Brown, of Berkshire." Copied from a MS. in a book presented by R. Lord Burlington, to Mr. William Sherwin. —WARTON.

All these persons were Roman Ca-

Digitized by Google

O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms, dwells such mighty rage?[1]
Sol through white curtains shot a tim'rous[2] ray,[3]
And ope'd those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,[4]
And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.

tholics. The marriage of Lord Petre to Miss Warmsley took place in March, 1712, and he died the year after in March, 1713, at the age of 22. Miss Fermor married Mr. Perkins, of Ufton Court, near Reading, in 1714. Her husband died in 1736, and she herself in 1738.—CROKER.

[1] This passage is a palpable imitation of the exordium of the Æneis, and particularly the last line.

——tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?

And dwell such passions in cœlestial minds?
—WAKEFIELD.

It was in the first editions:

And dwells such rage in softest bosoms then,
And lodge such daring souls in little men?
—POPE.

The second line of the rejected reading was from Addison's translation of the fourth Georgic:

Their little bodies lodge a mighty soul.

Pope probably altered the couplet in consequence of an objection of the author of the Supplement to the Profound, who remarked upon the mean effect which resulted from throwing the rhyme upon "then;" "for the rhyme," says Dr. Trapp, "draws out the sound of little and ignoble words, and makes them observed."

[2] By *timorous* I understand *feeble*, from the medium through which it passed.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Verse 13, &c., stood thus in the first edition:

Sol through white curtains did his beams display,
And ope'd those eyes which brighter shine than they:
Shook just had giv'n himself the rousing shake,
And nymphs prepared their chocolate to take;
Thrice the wrought slipper knocked against the ground,
And striking watches the tenth hour resound.—POPE.

[4] Belinda rung a hand-bell, which not being answered, she knocked with her slipper. Bell-hanging was not introduced into our domestic apartments till long after the date of the Rape of the Lock. There are no bells at Hampton Court, nor were there any in the first quarter of the present century at Chatsworth and Holkham. I myself, about the year year 1790, remember that it was still the practice for ladies to summon their attendants to their bedchambers by knocking with a high-heeled shoe. Servants, too, were accustomed to wait in ante-rooms, whence they were summoned by hand-bells, and this explains the extraordinary number of such rooms in the houses of the last century.—CROKER.

Digitized by Google

Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,[1]
Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest:
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed
The morning dream that hovered o'er her head,
A youth more glitt'ring than a birth-night beau,[2]
(That ev'n in slumber caused her cheek to glow)
Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say.
"Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!
If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught;
Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,[3]
Or virgins visited by angel-pow'rs
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs;
Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,
To maids alone and children are revealed.
What though no credit doubting wits may give?
The fair and innocent shall still believe.
Know then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
The light militia of the lower sky:

[1] All the verses from hence to the end of this canto were added afterwards.—POPE.

And, as Mr. Croker observes, Pope, in adding them, did not perceive that he introduced an inconsistency. At ver. 14 Belinda is represented as waking, and at ver. 20 we have her still sleeping.

[2] The frequenters of the court appeared in clothes of unusual splendour on the birth-day of King, Queen, Prince or Princess of Wales. There are innumerable allusions in the writings of the time to the magnificence of the dresses at the birth-night balls.

[3] "The silver token" alludes to the silver pennies which fairies were said to drop at night into the shoes of maids who kept the house clean and tidy. "The circled green" refers to those rings of grass of a deeper hue than the surrounding pasture, which were formerly believed to be caused by the midnight dances "of airy elves.' This was the lore taught by the nurse. The priest infused the legends of "virgins visited by angel-powers." —CROKER.

Digitized by Google

These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclosed in woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
That all her vanities at once are dead;[2]
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of ombre, after death survive.[3]
For when the fair in all their pride expire,
To their first elements, their souls retire:
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame
Mount up, and take a salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip, with nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver prude sinks downward to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.

[1] The drive in Hyde Park is still called the ring, though the site and shape have been changed.—CROKER.

The box at the theatre, and the ring in Hyde Park, are frequently mentioned as the two principal places for the public display of beauty and fashion. Thus Lord Dorset, in his lines on Lady Dorchester:

Wilt thou still sparkle in the box
Or ogle in the ring.

And Garth, in the Dispensary, speaking of a deceased young lady, says:

How lately did this celebrated thing
Blaze in the box, and sparkle in the ring.

[2] Epilogue to Dryden's Tyrannick Love:

For after death we sprites have just such natures
We had, for all the world, when human creatures.—STEEVENS.

[3] Quæ gratia currûm
Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos. Virg. Æneid, vi.—POPE.

To Dryden's version of which passage our poet was indebted:

The love of horses which they had alive,
And care of chariots, after death survive.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.[1]
"Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embraced:
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.[2]
What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below.[3]
"Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,[4]
For life predestined to the gnomes' embrace.
These[5] swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdained, and love denied:
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their sweeping train,

[1] Dryden, Æn. i. 196:

The realms of ocean and the fields of air.
—WAKEFIELD.

In Le Comte de Gabalis the salamanders who dwelt in fire, the nymphs who peopled the seas and rivers, the gnomes who filled the earth almost to the centre, and the sylphs who in countless multitudes floated in the air, are said to be formed of the purest portion of the elements they respectively inhabit. But their moral and mental natures are not, as in the Rape of the Lock, the counter-part of their corporeal qualities, and they are a race of beings distinct from man, and not deceased mortals, as with Pope, who was indebted for this circumstance to the account of the fairy train in Dryden's Flower and Leaf:

And all those airy shapes you now behold
Were human bodies once, and clothed with earthly mould.

[2] The idea and the phraseology are both from Paradise Lost, i. 423:

For spirits when they please
Can either sex assume, or both . . . .
. . . . . In what shape they choose,
Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure,
Can execute their aery purposes,
And works of love or enmity fulfil.

[3] Parody of Homer.—WARBURTON.
Dryden, Hind and Panther, 3rd part:

Immortal pow'rs the term of conscience know,
But int'rest is her name with men below.
—HOLT WHITE.

[4] That is, too sensible of their beauty.—WARBURTON.

[5] The gnomes who prompt the disdain of the nymphs predestined to disappointment.—CROKER.

Digitized by Google

And garters, stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds 'Your Grace' salutes their ear.
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
Teach infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a beau.

"Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals levity may call;
Oh blind to truth! the sylphs contrive it all.
"Of these am I, who thy protection claim,[2]
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star[3]
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend.
But heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warned by the sylph, oh pious maid, beware!

[1] Jam clypeus clypeis, umbone repellitur umbo.
Ense minax ensis, pede pes, et cuspide cuspis, &c. Statius.—WARBURTON.

To drive a coach has an exclusive technical meaning, which renders Pope's phrase improper for expressing that the thought of a second coach obliterates from the minds of belles the thought of a previous coach.

[2] "Claim thy protection" signifies "I claim to be protected by thee," whereas the sense here is, "I claim to protect thee."

[3] The language of the Platonists, the writers of the intelligible world of Spirits, &c.—POPE.

Digitized by Google

This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of man!"
He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue;
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;[1]
Wounds, charms, and ardours, were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from thy head.
And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.
Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;[2]
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billets-doux.
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,

[1] It cannot be that Belinda then saw for the first time a billet-doux. The meaning no doubt is that a billet-doux was the first thing she saw that morning.—CROKER.

[2] Evidently from Addison's Spectator, No. 69, May, 1711. "The single dress of a woman of quality is often the product of an hundred climates. The muff and the fan come together from the different ends of the earth. The scarf is sent from the torrid zone, and the tippet from beneath the pole. The brocade petticoat arises out of the mines of Peru, and the diamond necklace out of the bowels of Indostan."—WARTON.

Digitized by Google

Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,[1]
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

CANTO II.

Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams[2]
Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.[3]
Fair nymphs, and well-dressed youths around her shone,
But ev'ry eye was fixed on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those;
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.

[1] Ancient traditions of the Rabbis relate, that several of the fallen angels became amorous of women, and particularize some; among the rest Asael, who lay with Naamah, the wife of Noah, or of Ham; and who, continuing impenitent, still presides over the women's toilets. Bereshi Rabbi, in Genes. vi. 2.—Pope.

[2] A comparison pressed too far loses its beauty in departing from truth. When Pope makes Belinda equal, in the glory of her appearance, to the sun,—"the rival of his beams" who was "of this great world both eye and soul," he falls into an insipid hyperbole. When Chaucer, in his Knight's Tale, says,

Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,

every one feels the matchless charm of the allusion.

[3] From hence the poem continues, in the first edition, to ver. 46:

"The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air;"

all after, to the end of this Canto, being additional.—Pope.

Digitized by Google

Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide;
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.[1]
This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck,
With shining ringlets, the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race insnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.[2]
Th' advent'rous baron the bright locks admired;
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attained his ends.[3]
For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implored
Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r adored,
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
And all the trophies of his former loves;

[1] Wakefield remarks, that this line is marred by the abbreviation, *you'll*, and he suggests that a better reading would be,

Look on her face and *you* forget them all.

[2] Sandys's Paraphrase of the Song of Solomon, 1641:

One hair of thine in fetters ties.

Buchanan, Epigram. lib. i. xiv.:

Et modo membra pilo vinctus miser abstrahor uno.—STEEVENS.

Dryden's Persius, v. 247:

She knows her man, and when you rant and swear,
Can draw you to her with a single hair.

[3] An imitation, or a translation rather, of Æneid, ii. 390:

———dolus, an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

With tender billets-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,
The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.[1]
But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:[2]
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And softened sounds along the waters die;[3]
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.
All but the sylph—with careful thoughts oppressed,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.[4]
He summons straight his denizens of air;
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe,
That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.

[1] Virgil, Æneid, xi. 798.—POPE. Dryden's Translation:

Apollo heard, and granting half his pray'r,
Shuffled in winds the rest, and tossed in empty air.

So Dryden's version of Ceyx & Alcyone, Ovid. *Met.* x.:

This last petition heard of all her pray'r,
The rest dispersed by winds were lost in air.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden, Æn. vii. 10:

the moon was bright
And the sea trembled with her silver light.
—HOLT WHITE.

Pope, says Wakefield, has put "tides" in the plural "merely to accommodate the rhyme." The tides are the ebb and the flow, and cannot be applied to only one of the two.

[3] Dryden's Virgin Martyr:

And music dying in remoter sounds.—STEEVENS.

[4] A parody on the beginning of the second and tenth books of the Iliad. —WAKEFIELD.

Pope's own translation of the commencement of the tenth book has a close resemblance to the lines in the Rape of the Lock:

All night the chiefs before their vessels lay,
And lost in sleep the labours of the day:
All but the king; with various thoughts oppressed
His country's cares lay rolling in his breast.

Digitized by Google

Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,[1]
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,[2]
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior by the head, was Ariel placed;
His purple pinions opening to the sun,
He raised his azure wand, and thus begun.
"Ye sylphs and sylphids, to your chief give ear!
Fays, fairies, genii, elves, and demons, hear!
Ye know the spheres, and various tasks assigned
By laws eternal to th' aërial kind.
Some in the fields of purest ether play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,[3]
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.[4]
Some less refined, beneath the moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,[5]
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,

[1] The gossamer, which is spun in autumn by a species of spider that has the power of sailing in the air, was formerly supposed to be the product of sun-burnt dew. Thus Spenser speaks of

—— The fine nets which oft we woven see
Of scorched dew.

[2] Milton of the wings of Raphael, Par. Lost, v. 283:

And colours dipped in heav'n;
Sky-tinctured grain.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] The comets.

[4] "Did you ever," says Dennis, "hear before that the planets were rolled by the *aerial* kind?" and Pope writes on the margin "expressly otherwise." He states that the "ethereal" kind are described down to ver. 80, and that the "aerial kind" are the "less refined" beings who dwell "beneath the moon." Clearly the distinction had not occurred to him when he wrote the poem, for he calls both kinds "aerial" at ver. 76.

[5] In the first edition:

Hover, and catch the shooting stars by night.

Dryden's Flower and Leaf:

At other times we reign by night alone,
And posting through the skies pursue the moon.

Digitized by Google

Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of nations own,
And guard with arms divine the British throne.[1]

"Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprisoned essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows ere they drop in show'rs
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.[2]

"This day, black omens threat the brightest fair
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapped in night.
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour, or her new brocade;
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
Or whether heav'n has doomed that Shock must fall.
Haste then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care;

[1] A compliment to Queen Anne, whom he lavishly commends in his Windsor Forest.—WAKEFIELD.

The angel in Addison's Rosamond, Act 3, says,

> In hours of peace, unseen, unknown
> I hover o'er the British throne.

[2] Sir T. Browne, Relig. Med. Part I. 31; "I do think that many mysteries ascribed to our own inventions have been the courteous revelations of spirits; for those noble essences in heaven bear a friendly regard unto their fellow natures on earth." The comparative inferiority of Pope's mimic subject is strongly felt when we bring the diminutive ideas into immediate contrast with their elevated originals.

Digitized by Google

The drops to thee, Brillante,[1] we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa,[2] tend her fav'rite lock;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.[3]

"To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the petticoat:
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence[4] to fail,
Though stiff with hoops and armed with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.[5]

"Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins;
Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedged, whole ages, in a bodkin's eye:
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or alum styptics with contracting pow'r
Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flow'r:[6]
Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling mill,[7]

[1] That is, her ear-drops set with brilliants.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] To crisp in our earlier writers is a common word for curl, from the Latin *crispo*.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] "This," says Warburton, in a manuscript note, "was a fine stroke of satire to insinuate that the lap-dog is often the concern of the fair, superior to all the charities, as Milton calls them, of parental relation."

[4] Ovid, Met. xiii, 2: Clypei dominus *septemplicis* Ajax. — WARBURTON.

Sandys's Translation:

Uprose the master of the seven-fold Shield.

[5] The hoop petticoat, in spite of the notion of Addison, that "a touch of his pen would make it contract itself like the sensitive plant," continued in fashion as an ordinary dress for upwards of threescore years, and remained the court costume till the death of Queen Charlotte.—CROKER.

[6] Many modern editions read *shrivelled*, but Pope took his epithet, now obsolete, from Dryden's Flower and Leaf:

Then drooped the fading flow'rs, their beauty fled,
And rivelled up with heat, lay dying in their bed.—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Chocolate was made in a kind of mill.—CROKER.

Digitized by Google

In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below!"[1]
He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend:
Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
Some thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair;
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear;
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate.

CANTO III.

Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flow'rs,[2]
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.[3]
Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
In various talk th' instructive hours they passed,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;[4]

[1] The anonymous translator of Ariadne to Theseus:

And trembling at the waves which roll below.—Wakefield.

[2] The first edition continues from this line to ver. 24 of this Canto.—Pope.

[3] The modern portion of Hampton Court, and the East and South fronts, were built by William III., who frequently resided there. Queen Anne only went there occasionally.—Croker.

[4] Originally in the first edition,

In various talk the cheerful hours they passed,
Of who was bit, or who capotted last.
—Pope.

When one party has won all the tricks of cards at picquet, he is said to have *capotted* his antagonist.—Johnson.

Dryden's Æn. vi. 720:

While thus in talk the flying hours they pass.

Digitized by Google

One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;[1]
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,[2]
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
  Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;[3]
The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;[4]
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the toilet cease.[5]
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,[6]
Burns to encounter two advent'rous knights,
At ombre singly to decide their doom;[7]
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.

[1] Japan screens, as appears from the Spectator, were then the rage, and in the Woman of Taste, 1733, we have the couplet,

Ne'er chuse a screen, and never touch a fan,
Till it has sailed from India or Japan.

[2] The snuff-box of the beau, and the fan of the woman of fashion, are frequent subjects of ridicule in the Spectator. The fan was employed to execute so many little coquettish manœuvres, that Addison ironically proposed that ladies should be drilled in the use of it, as soldiers were trained to the exercise of arms.

[3] The fifth Pastoral of A. Philips:

The sun now mounted to the noon of day
Began to shoot direct his burning ray.

[4] From Congreve.—WARTON.

A repulsive and unfounded couplet. Judges never sign sentences, and if a juryman is in haste to dine it is at least as easy to acquit as to condemn. —CROKER.

[5] Dryden's Æn. vii. 170:

And the long labours of your voyage end.—
WAKEFIELD.

Owing to the change of fashion the particulars in the text no longer serve to mark the time of the day. From Swift's Journal of a Modern Lady, written in 1728, we learn that the fashionable dinner-hour, when "the long labours of the toilet ceased," was four o'clock. Cards were reserved for after tea; but the holiday-makers, who in the Rape of the Lock, go by water to Hampton Court, are represented as playing from the usual dinner-hour till coffee is brought in, which may have been a common arrangement in these pleasure-parties.

[6] All that follows of the game at ombre, was added since the first edition, till ver. 105, which connected thus,

Sudden the board with cups and spoons is crowned.—POPE.

[7] Ombre was invented in Spain, and owed its name to the phrase which was to be used by the person who undertook to stand the game,—"*Yo soy l'hombre*, I am the man." In the Rape of the Lock Belinda was

Digitized by Google

Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band the number of the sacred nine.[1]
Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card:
First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,[2]
Then each according to the rank they bore;
For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four kings, in majesty revered,
With hoary whisky and a forky beard;
And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;
Four knaves in garbs succinct,[3] a trusty band;
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And parti-coloured troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.
The skilful nymph reviews her force with care:
Let spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.[4]
Now move to war her sable Matadores,[5]
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable lord![6]
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.

the ombre, and hence she is described as encountering singly her two antagonists.

[1] The game could be played with two, three, or five; but three was the usual number, and nine cards were dealt to each.

[2] From the Spanish *matador*, a murderer, because the matadors in ombre were the three best cards, and the slayers of all that came into competition with them.

[3] Knave was the old term for a servant, and Wakefield remarks that they are represented "in garbs succinct," because, among the ancients, domestics, when at work, had their flowing robes gathered up to the girdle about the waist.

[4] The ombre had the privilege of deciding which suit should be trumps.

[5] The whole idea of this description of a game at ombre is taken from Vida's description of a game at Chess in his poem intitled *Scacchia Ludus*. —WARBURTON.

Pope not only borrowed the general conception of representing the game under the guise of a battle, but he has imitated particular passages of his Latin prototype. Vida's poem is a triumph of ingenuity, when the intricacy of chess is considered, and the difficulty of expressing the moves in a dead language. Yet the original is eclipsed by Pope's more consummate copy.

[6] Spadillio is from *Espadilla*, the

Digitized by Google

As many more Manillio forced to yield,
And marched a victor from the verdant field.
Him Basto followed, but his fate more hard
Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary majesty of spades appears,[1]
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
The rest, his many-coloured robe concealed.
The rebel knave, who dares his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.
Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,
And mowed down armies in the fights of loo,[2]
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguished by the victor spade!
Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;
Now to the baron fate inclines the field.
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
Th' imperial consort of the crown of spades.
The club's black tyrant first her victim died,
Spite of his haughty mien, and barb'rous pride:
What boots the regal circle on his head,[3]
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And of all monarchs only grasps the globe?
The baron now his diamonds pours apace!
Th' embroidered king who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent queen, with pow'rs combined,
Of broken troops, an easy conquest find.

Spanish term for the ace of spades; and *Basto* is the Spanish name for the ace of clubs. Whatever suit was trumps the ace of spades was the first card in power, and the ace of clubs the third. Manillio, the second in power of the three Matadores, varied with the trumps. When spades or clubs were trumps Manillio was the two of trumps, and when hearts or diamonds were trumps Manillio was the seven of trumps.

[1] Dryden's MacFlecknoe:

The hoary prince in majesty appeared.

[2] Pam, the highest card in loo, is the knave of clubs.

[3] These lines are a parody of several passages in Virgil.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Clubs, diamonds, hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous strew the level green.
Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye;
The pierced battalions disunited fall,
In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.
The knave of diamonds tries his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful chance!) the queen of hearts.
At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.[1]
And now (as oft in some distempered state)
On one nice trick depends the gen'ral fate:
An ace of hearts steps forth: the king unseen
Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive queen:
He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate ace.[2]
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.[3]
Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,[4]
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.

[1] Dryden's Æn. vi. 384:

Just in the gate, and in the jaws of hell.—WAKEFIELD.

If either of the antagonists made more tricks than the ombre, the winner took the pool, and the ombre had to replace it for the next game. This was called codille.

[2] Unless hearts were trumps the ace of hearts ranked after king, queen, and knave.

[3] Dryden's Æn. xii. 1344:

With groans the Latins rend the vaulted sky,
Woods, hills, and valleys to the voice reply.

[4] Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurse;
Et servare modum, rebus sublata secundis!
Turno tempus erit magno cum optaverit emptum
Intactum Pallanta; et cum spolia ista diemque
Oderit. Virg.—WARBURTON.

Dryden's Translation, x. 698:

O mortals! blind of fate; who never know
To bear high fortune, or endure the low!
The time shall come, when Turnus, but in vain,
Shall wish untouched the trophies of the slain:
Shall wish the fatal belt were far away;
And curse the dire remembrance of the day.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Sudden these honours shall be snatched away,
And cursed for ever this victorious day.
For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,[1]
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;[2]
On shining altars of japan they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide:
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)[3]
Sent up in vapours to the baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair![4]

[1] From hence the first edition continues to ver. 134.—POPE.

[2] Coffee it seems was then not only made but ground by the ladies, and from the expression "the berries crackle" it might almost be supposed that they roasted it also.—CROKER.

"There was a side-board of coffee," says Pope, in his letter describing Swift's mode of life at Letcombe in 1714, "which the Dean roasted with his own hands in an engine for that purpose."

[3] A sarcastic allusion to the pretentious talk of the would-be politicians who frequented coffee-houses. These oracles were a standing topic of ridicule.

[4] Vide Ovid's Metamorphoses, viii. —POPE.

Nisus had a purple hair on which depended the safety of himself and his kingdom. When the Cretans made war upon him, his daughter Scylla fell in love with their leader Minos, whom she saw from a high tower. Hurried away by her passion, she plucked out her father's hair as he slept, and carried it to Minos, who was victorious in consequence, and Scylla was turned for her crime into a bird. The line of Pope is made up from a passage in Dryden's translation of the first Georgic, where, having applied the epithet "injured" to Nisus, he adds

And thus the purple hair is dearly paid.

Digitized by Google

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.[2]
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.[3]
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the virgin's thought:
As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched th' ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.
Amazed, confused, he found his pow'r expired,
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.
The peer now spreads the glitt'ring forfex wide,
T' inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed;

[1] Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel:

But when to sin our biassed nature leans
The careful devil is still at hand with means.

[2] In the first edition it was thus,

As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.—Ver. 134.

First he expands the glitt'ring forfex wide
T' inclose the lock; then joins it to divide;
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever,
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever.—Ver. 154.

All that is between was added afterwards.—POPE.

[3] This repetition is formed on similar passages in Virgil.—WAKEFIELD.

As, for instance, Dryden's Æn. vi. 950:

Then thrice around his neck his arms he threw;
And thrice the flitting shadow slipped away.

Digitized by Google

Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again,)[1]
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!
Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heav'n are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last;
Or when rich china vessels fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust, and painted fragments lie!
"Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,"
(The victor cried,) "the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,[2]
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis[3] shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,[4]

[1] See Milton, lib. vi. 330, of Satan cut asunder by the Angel Michael.—POPE.

But th' ethereal substance closed
Not long divisible.

[2] Dum juga montis aper, fluvios dum piscis amabit,
Semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt. Virg.—POPE.

[3] A famous book written about that time by a woman: full of court and party scandal; and in a loose effeminacy of style and sentiment, which well-suited the debauched taste of the better vulgar.—WARBURTON.

Mrs. Manley, the author of it, was the daughter of Sir Roger Manley, Governor of Guernsey, and the author of the first volume of the famous Turkish Spy, published from his papers, by Dr. Midgley. She was known and admired by all the wits of the times. She died in the house of Alderman Barber, Swift's friend; and was said to have been the mistress of the alderman.—WARTON.

Her actions were even more infamous than her writings. One Mary Thompson had been kept by a person named Pheasant, and at his death, in 1705, she endeavoured to pass herself off for his wife, that she might have a right of dower out of his estate. According to Mr. Nichols, in a note to Steele's Letters, Mrs. Manley was bribed by the promise of 100*l.* a-year for life, to aid Mrs. Thompson in getting a forged entry of the marriage inserted in a register. The case was heard in Doctors' Commons, and Mrs. Manley's guilt was proved. But neither her profligacy nor her frauds could deprive her of the countenance of political partisans like Swift and Prior, or of good-natured men of pleasure like Steele.

[4] Ladies in those days sometimes received visits in their bed-chambers, when the bed was covered with a richer counterpane, and "graced" by a small pillow with a worked case and lace edging. Of the female

Digitized by Google

While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!" [1]
What time would spare, from steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate! [2]
Steel could the labour of the gods destroy,[3]
And strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.[4]
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel? [5]

CANTO IV.

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,[6]
And secret passions laboured in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robbed of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,

fashions which Pope pleasantly assumes will be as lasting as the swimming of fishes or the flight of birds, the greater part have passed away.—CROKER.

[1] Ogilby, Virg. Ecl. v. :

So long thy honoured name and praise shall last.

Dryden, Æn. i. 857 :

Your honour, name, and praise shall never die!—WAKEFIELD.

[2] So Juvenal exactly, x. 146 :

Quandoquidem data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulchris.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Addison of Troy in his poem to the king :

And laid the labour of the gods in dust.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Addison's translation of Horace, Ode iii. 3 :

Thrice should my favourite Greeks his works confound,
And hew the shining fabric to the ground
—WAKEFIELD.

[5]

Ille quoque eversus mons est, &c.
Quid faciant crines, cum ferro talia cedant?
Catull. de Com. Berenices.—POPE.

[6]

At regina gravi, &c.—Virg. Æn. iv. 1.—POPE.

But anxious cares already seized the queen:
She fed within her veins a flame unseen.
Dryden's Transl.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,[1]
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravished hair.

For, that sad moment, when the sylphs withdrew,[2]
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repaired to search the gloomy cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the gnome,[3]
And in a vapour reached the dismal dome.
No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
The dreaded east is all the wind that blows.[4]
Here in a grotto, sheltered close from air,
And screened in shades from day's detested glare,[5]
She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim[6] at her head.

Two handmaids wait[7] the throne: alike in place,
But diff'ring far in figure and in face.

[1] The thought and turn of these lines is imitated from the Dispensary, Canto iii.:

Not beauties fret so much if freckles come,
Or nose should redden in the drawing-room.

[2] All the lines from hence to the 94th verse, that describe the house of Spleen, are not in the first edition; instead of them followed only these:

While her racked soul repose and peace requires,
The fi·roe Thalestris fans the rising fires.

And continued at the 94th verse of this Canto.—POPE.

[3] Garth in the Dispensary, canto iv.:

The bat with sooty wings flits through the grove.

[4] Spleen was thought to be engendered by the east wind. Cowper, in the Task, Bk. iv. ver. 363, speaks of

the unhealthful east
That breathes the spleen.

[5] In this description our poet seems to have had before him the Cave of Envy in Ovid, Met. ii. 760:

Protinus Invidiæ nigro squallentia tabo
Tecta petit. Domus est imis in vallibus antri
Abdita, sole carens, non ulli pervia vento.

Shut from the winds and from the wholesome skies,
In a deep vale the gloomy dungeon lies;
Dismal and cold, where not a beam of light
Invades the winter, or disturbs the night.
Addison's Trans.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] For "Megrim," the first edition has "Languor."

[7] "Wait" for "wait on" or "by" is a very harsh ellipse, though it has the sanction of Dryden.

Digitized by Google

Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed;
With store of pray'rs, for mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is filled; her bosom with lampoons.
There Affectation with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapped in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.
A constant vapour o'er the palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
Dreadful, as hermits' dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.[2]
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,[3]
Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and angels in machines.[4]

[1] Hypochondriacal disorders, under the name of vapours or spleen, were then the fashionable complaint, and as they often presented no definite bodily symptoms they could be readily feigned. The "gown" and "night-dress" of Pope are the "dressing-gown" of our day.

[2] Oldham had expressed the same idea in The Dream:

Not dying saints enjoy such ecstacies
When they in visions antedate their bliss.

The ancients believed the spleen to be the seat of mirth, and hence a disordered spleen was supposed to produce melancholy and moroseness. The second sense, in modern usage, has driven out the first, and spleen has become synonymous with surliness and gloom, but Pope in prose as well as verse gave it a wider range, and appears to ascribe to it those creations of the imagination which are mistaken for realities. "Methinks," he writes to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "I am imitating in my ravings the *dreams of splenetic* enthusiasts and solitaires, who fall in love with saints and fancy themselves in favour of angels and spirits."

[3] Snakes erect on the "rolling spires," or coils of their bodies, as Milton says that the neck of the serpent was "erect amidst his circling spires."

[4] In the last century the word "machine" was currently employed to designate the supernatural agents in a fiction, and their proceedings when acting in human affairs. Thus, by the expression "angels in machines" is meant angels interposing on behalf of mankind.

Digitized by Google

Unnumbered throngs, on ev'ry side are seen,
Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.[1]
Here living tea-pots stand, one arm held out,
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod walks;[2]
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pye talks;[3]
Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works,[4]
And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.[5]
Safe past the gnome through this fantastic band,
A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.[6]
Then thus addressed the pow'r—"Hail, wayward queen!
Who rule[7] the sex to fifty from fifteen:

[1] Ovid, Met. i. 1:

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
Corpora.

Of bodies changed to various forms I sing.
—Dryden's Trans.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] See Hom. Iliad. xviii., of Vulcan's walking tripods.—POPE.

Van Swieten, in his Commentaries on Boerhaave, relates that he knew a man who had studied till he fancied his legs to be of glass. His maid bringing wood to his fire threw it carelessly down. Our sage was terrified for his legs of glass. The girl, out of patience with his megrims, gave him a blow with a log on the parts affected. He started up in a rage, and from that moment recovered the use of his glass legs.—WARTON.

[3] Alludes to a real fact; a lady of distinction imagined herself in this condition.—POPE.

[4] The fanciful person, here alluded to, was Dr. Edward Pelling, chaplain to several successive monarchs. Having studied himself into hypochondriasis between the age of forty and fifty, he imagined himself to be pregnant, and forbore all manner of exercise lest motion should prove injurious to his ideal burden.—STEEVENS.

[5] This is adopted from the Loyal Subject of Beaumont and Fletcher.—STEEVENS.

[6] In imitation of the golden branch which Æneas carried as a passport when he visited the infernal regions. Spleenwort is a species of fern. "Its virtues," says Cowley, "are told in its name." He makes it compare itself with "painted flowers," and exclaim,

They're fair, 'tis true, they're cheerful, and they're green,
But I, though sad, procure a gladsome mien.

The plant has lost the little credit it once possessed as a remedy for hypochondriacal affections.

[7] Bishop Lowth notices Pope's frequent violation of grammar in joining a pronoun in the singular to a verb in the plural. Thus when he says in the Messiah,

O thou my voice inspire
Who touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire,

either "thou" should be "you," or else "touched" should be "touchedst, didst touch." Pope has committed the same error in this speech to the Queen of Spleen; for that "thou," and not "you," is, or ought to be, the

Digitized by Google

Parent of vapours [1] and of female wit,
Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
And send the godly in a pet to pray;
A nymph there is, that all thy pow'r disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like citron-waters [2] matrons' cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game;
If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
Or caused suspicion when no soul was rude,
Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,
Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave disease,
Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen."
The goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, though she grants his pray'r.
A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;
There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.

pronoun understood follows from the expression "*thy* power" at ver. 65. Hence "who rule" should be "who rulest," or "who dost rule," and so with the other verbs in the second person.

[1] The disease was probably named from the atmospheric vapours which were reputed to be a principal cause of English melancholy. Cowper says of England in his Task, Bk. v. ver. 462,

Thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine.

[2] Citron-water was a cordial distilled from a mixture of spirit of wine with the rind of citrons and lemons. There are numerous allusions in the literature of Pope's day to the fondness of women of fashion for this drink, as in Swift's Journal of a Modern Lady, where he says that "to cool her heated brains" when she wakes at noon she

Takes a large dram of citron-water.

Digitized by Google

A phial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.
The gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.
Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected, and her hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
And all the furies issued at the vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.
"O wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cried,
(While Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" replied)
"Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
For this your locks in paper durance bound?
For this with tort'ring irons wreathed around?
For this with fillets strained your tender head,
And bravely bore the double loads of lead?[1]
Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.[2]
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!
And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,
Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?

[1] The curl papers of ladies' hair used to be fastened with strips of pliant lead.—CROKER.

[2] That is, at whose shrine all our sex resign ease, pleasure, and virtue. "Honour" means female reputation.

Digitized by Google

Sooner shall grass in Hyde-Park Circus grow,[1]
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!"
She said; then raging to Sir Plume[2] repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs:
(Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane)[3]
With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
And thus broke out—"My Lord, why, what the devil!
Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil.
Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay prithee, pox!
Give her the hair"—he spoke, and rapped his box.
"It grieves me much," replied the peer again,
"Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain,
But by this lock, this sacred lock I swear,[4]
(Which never more shall join its parted hair;
Which never more its honours shall renew,
Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)

[1] A parody of Virgil, Ecl. i. 60.—WAKEFIELD.

Garth, Dispensary, Canto iii.:

The tow'ring Alps shall sooner sink to vales,
And leeches in our glasses swell to whales;
Or Norwich trade in instruments of steel,
And Bromingham in stuffs and druggets deal.

[2] Sir George Brown. He was angry that the poet should make him talk nothing but nonsense: and in truth one could not well blame him.—WARBURTON.

This is one instance out of many in which Pope took unwarrantable liberties with private character. Spence had been told that the description "was the very picture of the man."

[3] A cane diversified with darker spots.—WAKEFIELD.

The "nice conduct" of canes is ridiculed by Addison in No. 103 of the Tatler. A man of fashion, with "a cane very curiously clouded, and a blue ribbon to hang it on his wrist," protests that the "knocking it upon his shoe, leaning one leg upon it, or whistling with it on his mouth are such great reliefs to him in conversation that he does not know how to be good company without it." A second beau is warned that his cane must be forfeited if "he walks with it under his arm, brandishes it in the air, or hangs it on a button."

[4] In allusion to Achilles's oath in Homer, Il. i.—POPE.

But by this scepter solemnly I swear
Which never more green leaf or growing branch shall bear.
Dryden's Trans.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

That while my nostrils draw the vital air,[1]
This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head.[2]
But Umbriel, hateful gnome! forbears not so;
He breaks the phial whence the sorrows flow.[3]
Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half languishing, half drowned in tears;
On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,
Which, with a sigh, she raised; and thus she said.
"For ever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my fav'rite curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,[4]
If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of courts to num'rous ills betrayed.
Oh had I rather unadmired remained
In some lone isle, or distant northern land;
Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste bohea!
There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.
What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam?
O had I stayed, and said my pray'rs at home!

[1] Dryden's Æn. i. 770:

If yet he lives and draws this vital air.

[2] Borrowed from Dryden's Epistle to Mr. Granville:

The long contended honours of the field.—HOLT WHITE.

[3] These two lines are additional; and assign the cause of the different operation on the passions of the two ladies. The poem went on before without that distinction, as without any machinery, to the end of the Canto.—POPE.

At ver. 91, Umbriel empties the bag which contains the angry passions over the heads of Thalestris and Belinda. At ver. 142 he breaks the phial of sorrow over Belinda alone, whence Belinda's anger is turned to grief, and Thalestris remains indignant.

[4] A parody of Virg. Æn. iv. 657:

Felix heu nimium felix! si litora tantum
Nunquam Dardaniæ tetigissent nostra carinæ.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

'Twas this the morning omens seemed to tell,[1]
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box[2] fell;
The tott'ring china shook without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!
A sylph too warned me of the threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now believed too late!
See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy rapine spares:
These in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck;[3]
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;[4]
Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts, once more, thy sacrilegious hands.
Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!"

CANTO V.

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears,
But Fate and Jove had stopped the baron's ears.[5]
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,

[1] Pope originally wrote:

'Twas this the morning omens did foretell.

He altered the verse, together with one or two others of the same kind, to get rid of the "did."

[2] Butler, the poet, says that the object of black patches was to make the complexion look fairer by the contrast. Dryden has a similar idea in Palamon and Arcite:

Some sprinkled freckles on his face were seen
Whose dusk set off the whiteness of his skin.

[3] Prior's Henry and Emma:

No longer shall thy comely tresses break
In flowing ringlets on thy snowy neck.—Wakefield.

[4] Sir William Bowles on the Death of Charles II.:

And in their ruler's fate bewail their own.

[5] Translated from Virgil, Æn. iv. 440:

Fata obstant, placidasque viri deus obstruit aures.
Fate and great Jove had stopped his gentle ears.—Waller.—Wakefield.

Digitized by Google

While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.[1]
Then grave Clarissa[2] graceful waved her fan;
Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began.
"Say, why are beauties praised and honoured most,[3]
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?[4]
Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
Why angels called, and angel-like adored?[5]
Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved beaux,[6]
Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows?[7]

[1] The entreaties to stay which Dido's sister, Anna, addressed to Æneas.—CROKER.

Virgil says that the pathetic entreaties to stay sent a thrill of grief through the mighty breast of Æneas, but that his resolution was unshaken. Pope's couplet supposes that he inwardly wavered.

[2] A new character introduced in the subsequent editions, to open more clearly the moral of the poem, in a parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer.—POPE.

The parody first appeared when the Rape of the Lock was inserted in the quarto of 1717. In the previous enlarged editions, which contained the machinery, the sixth verse was followed by what is now verse thirty-seven:

To arms, to arms! the bold Thalestris cries.

[3] Homer.

Why boast we, Glaucus! our extended reign,
Where Xanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain;
Our num'rous herds that range each fruitful field,
And hills where vines their purple harvest yield;
Our foaming bowls with gen'rous nectar crowned,
Our feasts enhanced with music's sprightly sound;
Why on those shores are we with joy surveyed,
Admired as heroes, and as gods obeyed;
Unless great acts superior merit prove,
And vindicate the bounteous pow'rs above?
'Tis ours, the dignity they give, to grace;
The first in valour, as the first in place:
That while with wond'ring eyes our martial bands
Behold our deeds transcending our commands,
Such, they may cry, deserve the sov'reign state,
Whom those that envy, dare not imitate.
Could all our care elude the greedy grave,
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war
But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
The life which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to fame what we to nature owe;
Brave though we fall, and honoured if we live,
Or let us glory gain, or glory give.—
WARBURTON.

The passage quoted by Warburton is from Pope's own translation of the Episode of Sarpedon, which appeared in Dryden's Miscellany, in 1710.

[4] Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel:

The young men's vision, and the old men's dream.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Denham, in his version of the speech of Homer parodied by our poet:

Why all the tributes land and sea affords?—
As gods behold us, and as gods adore.—
WAKEFIELD.

[6] Gay, in the Toilette:

Nor shall side-boxes watch my restless eyes,
And, as they catch the glance in rows arise
With humble bows; nor white-gloved beaux approach
In crowds behind to guard me to my coach.
—WAKEFIELD.

[7] The ladies at this time always sat

Digitized by Google

How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:
That men may say, when we the front box grace,
Behold the first in virtue as in face!
Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charmed the small-pox, or chased old age away;
Who would not scorn what housewifes' cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.
But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
What then remains but well our pow'r to use,
And keep good humour still, whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."
So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued;[1]
Belinda frowned, Thalestris called her prude.
To arms, to arms! the fierce virago cries,[2]
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;

in the front, the gentlemen in the side-boxes.—NICHOLS.

In Steele's Theatre, No. 3, January 9, 1720, his "representatives of a British audience" are "three of the fair sex for the front boxes, two gentlemen of wit and pleasure for the side-boxes, and three substantial citizens for the pit." "The virgin ladies," he said, in the Guardian, No. 29, April 14, 1713, "usually dispose themselves in the front of the boxes, the young married women compose the second row, while the rear is generally made up of mothers of long standing, undesigning maids, and contented widows."—CUNNINGHAM.

[1] It is a verse frequently repeated in Homer after any speech,

——So spoke—and all the heroes applauded.
—POPE.

[2] From hence the first edition goes on to the conclusion, except a very few short insertions added to keep the machinery in view to the end of the poem.—POPE.

Digitized by Google

Heroes' and heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,
And base and treble voices strike the skies.[1]
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.
So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,[2]
And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:
Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day![3]
Triumphant Umbriel on a sconce's height[4]
Clapped his glad wings, and sate to view the fight.[5]
Propped on their bodkin spears,[6] the sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.
While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.[7]
"O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,"[8]
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.

[1] Æneid. v. 140:

——— ferit æthera clamor.
Their shouting strikes the skies.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Homer, Il. xx.—POPE.

[3] This verse is an improvement on the original, Æneid. viii. 246:

———trebidentque immisso lumine manes.
And the ghosts tremble at intruding light.—WAKEFIELD.

The concluding line of the paragraph is from Addison's translation of a passage in Silius Italicus:

Who pale with fear the rending earth survey
And startle at the sudden flash of day.

There is more of bathos than of humour from ver. 43 to ver. 52. The exaggeration is carried so far that even the similitude of caricature is lost.

[4] These four lines added, for the reason before mentioned.—POPE.

[5] Minerva in like manner, during the battle of Ulysses with the suitors in the Odyssey, perches on a beam of the roof to behold it.—POPE.

[6] Like the heroes in Homer when they are spectators of a combat.—WARTON.

[7] This idea is borrowed from a couplet in the Duke of Buckingham's Essay on Poetry, where he ridicules the poetical dialogues of the *dramatis personæ* in the reign of Charles II.

Or else like bells, eternally they chime
They sigh in simile, and die in rhyme.

[8] Wakefield quotes passages from

Digitized by Google

A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
"Those eyes are made so killing"[1]—was his last.[a]
Thus on Mæander's flow'ry margin lies[2]
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.
When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown;
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,
But, at her smile, the beau revived again.
Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,[3]
Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.
See fierce Belinda on the baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes:
Nor feared the chief th' unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.
But this bold lord with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued;
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
The gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.[4]
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.
"Now meet thy fate," incensed Belinda cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.

Sir Philip Sidney, Drummond, and Milton, in which the phrase "living death" occurs.

[1] The words of a song in the Opera of Camilla.—POPE.

[a] "Here," said Dennis, speaking of the death of the beau and witling, "we have a real combat, and a metaphorical dying," and he did the lines no injustice when he added that they were but a "miserable pleasantry."

[2] Sic ubi fata vocant, udis abjectus in herbis,
Ad vada Mæandri concinit albus olor.
Ov. Ep.—POPE.

[3] Vid. Homer, Il. viii. and Virg. Æn. xii.—POPE.

The passage in Homer to which the poet refers is where Jupiter, before the conflict between Hector and Achilles, weighs the issue in a pair of scales.

[4] These two lines added for the above reason.—POPE.

Digitized by Google

(The same, his ancient personage to deck,[1]
Her great great grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bell she jingled, and the whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin[2] graced her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)
"Boast not my fall," he cried, "insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low:
Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind;
All that I dread is leaving you behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive."[3]
"Restore the Lock!" she cries; and all around
"Restore the Lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.[4]
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.
But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!
The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal must be blessed,
So heav'n decrees! with heav'n who can contest?
Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth are treasured there.[5]

[1] In imitation of the progress of Agamemnon's sceptre in Homer, Il. ii.—POPE.

[2] Pins to adorn the hair were then called bodkins, and Sir George Etherege, in Tonson's Second Miscellany, traces the genealogy of some jewels through the successive stages of the ornament of a cap, the handle of a fan, and ear-rings, till they became, like the gold seal rings, in the Rape of the Lock,

A diamond bodkin in each tress,
The badges of her nobleness,
For every stone, as well as she,
Can boast an ancient pedigree.

[3] "Who," asked Dennis, "ever heard of a dead man that burnt in Cupid's flames?" Pope had originally written,

And still burn on, in Cupid's flames, alive.

[4] Dryden's Alexander's Feast:

A present deity! they shout around:
A present deity! the vaulted roofs rebound.
—STEEVENS.

[5] Vide Ariosto, Canto XXXIV.—POPE.

Digitized by Google

There heroes' wits are kept in pond'rous vases,[1]
And beaus' in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.
There broken vows, and death-bed alms[2] are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends of ribbon bound,
The courtier's promises, and sick man's pray'rs,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,[3]
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.
But trust the muse—she saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes:[4]
(So Rome's great founder to the heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confessed in view)
A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.[5]
Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,
The heav'ns bespangling with dishevelled light.
The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleased pursue its progress through the skies.[6]

From the catalogue which follows it appears that, by "*all* things lost on earth," Pope meant only such things as, in his opinion, were hypocritical, foolish, and frivolous. These mounted to the lunar sphere when they had finished their course here below,—a career very short in instances like the "tears of heirs," and, perhaps, very long in instances like the butterflies preserved in the cabinets of collectors.

[1] Apparently Pope had the erroneous idea that distinguished soldiers were men of dull and ponderous minds.

[2] The alms would not be "lost on earth," however unprofitable they might be to the alms-givers, from whom they had been extorted by fear instead of proceeding from a benevolent disposition.

[3] Dryden's Œdipus, act 2:

The smiles of courtiers, and the harlot's tears,
The tradesman's oaths, and mourning of an heir,
Are truths, to what priests tell.—
HOLT WHITE.

[4] Denham, in Cooper's Hill, gave him a hint:

their airy shape
All but a quick poetic sight escape.—
WAKEFIELD.

[5] Flammiferumque trahens spatioso limite crinem
Stella micat. Ovid.—POPE.

Dryden, Æneis, v. 1092:

Descends, and draws behind a trail of light.
—WAKEFIELD.

[6] These two lines added, for the same reason, to keep in view the machinery of the poem.—POPE.

Dryden's Æneis, v. 691:

And as it flew
A train of following flames ascending drew;
Kindling they mount, and mark the shiny way
Across the skies, as falling meteors play.

Digitized by Google

This the beau monde shall from the Mall survey,
And hail with music its propitious ray;[1]
This the bless'd lover shall for Venus take,
And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake;[2]
This Partridge[3] soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;[4]
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
For after all the murders of your eye,[5]
When, after millions slain,[6] yourself shall die;
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This lock the muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.[7]

[1] The promenades in the Mall lasted till the middle of the reign of George III., and it would appear from this line that they were enlivened by music.—CROKER.

[2] Rosamond's lake was a small oblong piece of water near the Pimlico Gate of St. James's Park. When it was done away with, about the middle of the last century, the public, unwilling to lose the romantic name, transferred it to the dirty pond in the Green Park, which has, in its turn, been filled up.—CROKER.

[3] John Partridge was a ridiculous stargazer, who in his almanacks every year never failed to predict the downfall of the Pope, and the King of France, then at war with the English. —POPE.

He had been made the subject of ridicule by Swift, Steele, Addison and others.—CROKER.

[4] Milton, Par. Lost, v. ver. 261, calls the telescope "the glass of Galileo," who first employed it to observe the heavens.

[5] Phœbe in As You Like It, Act iii. Sc. 5, says to her despised and despairing lover,

Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye.

[6] The compliment was meant to be serious, but is marred by its extravagance. "Millions" is too hyperbolical.

[7] Spenser in his 75th Sonnet:

Not so, quoth I: let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternise,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.

And Cowley, in his imitation Horace, Ode iv. 2:

He bids him live and grow in fame
Among the stars he sticks his name.—
WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

RAPE OF THE LOCK.

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos
Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.—MART.

First Edition.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

RAPE OF THE LOCK.

CANTO I.

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty quarrels rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to C—l, Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
And dwells such rage in softest bosoms then,
And lodge such daring souls in little men?

Sol through white curtains did his beams display,
And ope'd those eyes which brighter shine than they,
Shock just had giv'n himself the rousing shake,
And nymphs prepared their chocolate to take;
Thrice the wrought slipper knocked against the ground,
And striking watches the tenth hour resound.
Belinda rose, and midst attending dames,
Launched on the bosm of the silver Thames:
A train of well-dressed youths around her shone,
And ev'ry eye was fixed on her alone:
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore
Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.

Digitized by Google

Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forgive 'em all.
This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets her smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race insnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
Th' adventurous baron the bright locks admired;
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toil attends,
Few ask if fraud or force attained his ends.
For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implored
Propitious heav'n, and every pow'r adored,
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay the sword-knot Sylvia's hands had sewn
With Flavia's busk that oft had wrapped his own:
A fan, a garter, half a pair of gloves,
And all the trophies of his former loves.
With tender billets-doux he lights the pire,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,
The rest the winds dispersed in empty air.
Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flow'rs,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.

Digitized by Google

Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.
  Hither our nymphs and heroes did resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
In various talk the cheerful hours they passed,
Of who was bit, or who capotted last;
This speaks the glory of the British queen,
And that describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
  Now when, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
When hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;
When merchants from th' Exchange return in peace,
And the long labours of the toilet cease,
The board's with cups and spoons, alternate, crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
On shining altars of japan they raise
The silver lamp, and fiery spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide.
At once they gratify their smell and taste,
While frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!
  But when to mischief mortals bend their mind,
How soon fit instruments of ill they find!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:

Digitized by Google

So ladies, in romance, assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight;
He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.
He first expands the glitt'ring forfex wide
T' enclose the lock; then joins it, to divide;
One fatal stroke the sacred hair does sever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!
  The living fires come flashing from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks by dames to heav'n are cast,
When husbands die, or lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich china vessels, fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie!
  "Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,"
The victor cried, "the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!"
  What time would spare, from steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel did the labour of the gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' aspiring tow'rs of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel?

Digitized by Google

CANTO II.

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lover robbed of all his bliss,
Not ancient lady when refused a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravished hair.
While her racked soul repose and peace requires,
The fierce Thalestris fans the rising fires.
"O wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cried,
(And Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" replied)
"Was it for this you took such constant care
Combs, bodkins, leads, pomatums to prepare?
For this your locks in paper durance bound?
For this with tort'ring irons wreathed around?
Oh had the youth been but content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!
Gods! shall the ravisher display this hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all, our sex resign.
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!
And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,
Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;

Digitized by Google

Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lapdogs, parrots, perish all!"
She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs:
Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane,
With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
And thus broke out—"My lord, why, what the devil!
Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay, prithee, pox!
Give her the hair."—He spoke, and rapped his box.
"It grieves me much," replied the peer again,
"Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain:
But by this lock, this sacred lock, I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted hair;
Which never more its honours shall renew,
Clipped from the lovely head where once it grew)
That, while my nostrils draw the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head.
But see! the nymph in sorrow's pomp appears,
Her eyes half-languishing, half drowned in tears;
Now livid pale her cheeks, now glowing red,
On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,
Which with a sigh she raised, and thus she said:
"For ever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my fav'rite curl away;
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of courts to num'rous ills betrayed.
O had I rather unadmired remained
In some lone isle, or distant northern land,
Where the gilt chariot never marked the way,
Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste bohea!
There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.
What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam?
O had I stayed, and said my pray'rs at home!

Digitized by Google

'Twas this the morning omens did foretell,
Thrice from my trembling hand the patchbox fell;
The tott'ring china shook without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!
See the poor remnants of this slighted hair!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy own did spare:
This in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck;
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;
Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands."
  She said: the pitying audience melt in tears;
But fate and Jove had stopped the baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,
While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.
"To arms, to arms!" the bold Thalestris cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,
And bass and treble voices strike the skies;
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.
  So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage,
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms,
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms;
Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!
  While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.
"O cruel nymph; a living death I bear,"
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.

Digitized by Google

A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
"Those eyes are made so killing"—was his last.
Thus on Meander's flow'ry margin lies
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.
As bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown:
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,
But at her smile the beau revived again.
Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.
See fierce Belinda on the baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes:
Nor feared the chief th' unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.
But this bold lord, with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued:
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.
"Now meet thy fate," th' incensed virago cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
"Boast not my fall," he said, "insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low;
Nor think to die dejects my lofty mind;
All that I dread is leaving you behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And still burn on, in Cupid's flames, alive."
"Restore the lock!" she cries; and all around
"Restore the lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.
But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!
The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal must be blessed,
So heav'n decrees! with heav'n who can contest?

Digitized by Google

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
Since all that man e'er lost is treasured there.
There heroes' wits are kept in pond'rous vases,
And beaux' in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.
There broken vows, and death-bed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends of ribbon bound,
The courtier's promises, and sick man's pray'rs,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.
But trust the muse—she saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick poetic eyes:
(Thus Rome's great founder to the heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confessed in view)
A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,
The skies bespangling with dishevelled light.
This the beau monde shall from the Mall survey,
As through the moonlight shade they nightly stray,
And hail with music its propitious ray;
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.
Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
For after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die;
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This lock the muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ELEGY

TO THE MEMORY OF

AN UNFORTUNATE LADY.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

See the Duke of Buckingham's verses to a Lady designing to retire into a Monastery compared with Mr. Pope's Letters to several Ladies, p. 206 [86], quarto edition. She seems to be the same person whose unfortunate death is the subject of this poem.[1]—Pope.

The unfortunate lady seems to have been a particular favourite of our poet. Whether he himself was the person she was removed from I am not able to say, but whoever reads his verses to her memory will find she had a very great share in him. This young lady who was of quality, had a very large fortune, and was in the eye of our discerning poet a great beauty, was left under the guardianship of an uncle, who gave her an education suitable to her title; for Mr. Pope declares she had titles, and she was thought a fit match for the greatest peer. But very young she contracted an acquaintance, and afterwards some degree of intimacy, with a young gentleman who is only imagined, and, having settled her affections there, refused a match proposed to her by her uncle. Spies being set upon her, it was not long before her correspondence with her lover of lower degree was discovered, which, when taxed with by her uncle, she had too much truth and honour to deny. The uncle finding that she could not, nor would strive to withdraw her regard from him, after a little time forced her abroad, where she was received with all due respect to her quality, but kept up from the sight or speech of anybody but the creatures of this severe guardian, so that it was impossible for her lover even to deliver a letter that might ever come to her hand. Several were received from him with promises to get them privately delivered to her, but those were all sent to England, and only served to make them more cautious who had her in care. She languished here a considerable time, went through a great deal of sickness and sorrow, wept and sighed continually. At last wearied out, and despairing quite, the unfortunate lady, as Mr. Pope justly calls her, put an end to her own life. Having bribed a woman servant to procure her a sword, she was found dead upon the ground, but warm. The severity of the laws

[1] Wakefield says "there is an affectation and ambiguity in this account which he does not comprehend." The uncertainty with which Pope speaks, refers to his doubt of the identity of the lady celebrated by the duke. Enough of "ambiguity and affectation" remains, which would have been no mystery to Wakefield if he had been aware that Pope's object was to deceive.

Digitized by Google

of the place where she was in denied her christian burial, and she was buried without solemnity, or even any to wait on her to her grave except some young people of the neighbourhood, who saw her put into common ground, and strewed her grave with flowers, which gave some offence to the priesthood, who would have buried her in the highway, but it seems their power there did not extend so far.—AYRE.

From this account, given with the evident intention to raise the lady's character, it does not appear that she had any claim to praise, nor much to compassion. She seems to have been impatient, violent and ungovernable. Her uncle's power could not have lasted long; the hour of liberty and choice would have come in time. But her desires were too hot for delay, and she liked self-murder better than suspense. Nor is it discovered that the uncle, whoever he was, is with much justice delivered to posterity as "a false guardian." He seems to have done only that for which a guardian is appointed; he endeavoured to direct his niece till she should be able to direct herself. Poetry has not often been worse employed than in dignifying the amorous fury of a raving girl. The verses have drawn much attention by the illaudable singularity of treating suicide with respect; and they must be allowed to be written in some parts with vigorous animation, and in others with gentle tenderness; nor has Pope produced any poem in which the sense predominates more over the diction. But the tale is not skilfully told; it is not easy to discover the character of either the lady or her guardian. Pope praises her for the dignity of ambition, and yet condemns the uncle to detestation for his pride. The ambitious love of a niece may be opposed by the interest, malice, or envy of an uncle, but never by his pride. On such an occasion a poet may be allowed to be obscure, but inconsistency never can be right.—JOHNSON.

I have in my possession a letter to Dr. Johnson, containing the name of the lady, and a reference to a gentleman well known in the literary world for her history. Him I have seen, and from a memorandum of some particulars to the purpose, communicated to him by a lady of quality, he informs me that the unfortunate lady's name was Withinbury, corruptly pronounced Winbury; that she was in love with Pope, and would have married him; that her guardian, though she was deformed in her person, looking upon such a match as beneath her, sent her to a convent, and that a noose, and not a sword, put an end to her life.—SIR JOHN HAWKINS.

The Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate lady, as it came from the heart, is very tender and pathetic—more so, I think, than any other copy of verses of our author. The true cause of the excellence of this elegy is, that the occasion of it was real,—so true is the maxim that nature is more powerful than fancy, and that we can always feel

Digitized by Google

more than we can imagine; and that the most artful fiction must give way to truth, for this lady was beloved by Pope. After many and wide enquiries I have been informed that her name was Wainsbury, and that—which is a singular circumstance—she was as ill-shaped and deformed as our author. Her death was not by a sword, but, what would less bear to be told poetically, she hanged herself. Johnson has too severely censured this elegy when he says, "that it has drawn much attention by the illaudable singularity of treating suicide with respect." She seems to have been driven to this desperate act by the violence and cruelty of her uncle and guardian, who forced her to a convent abroad, and to which circumstance Pope alludes in one of his letters.—WARTON.

The real history of the lady distinguished by the epithet "unfortunate" in Pope's exquisite elegy, is still involved in mysterious uncertainty. One thing is plain, that he wished little should be known. It is remarkable that Caryll asks the question in two letters, but Pope returns no answer. It is in vain, after the fruitless enquiry of Johnson and Warton, perhaps, to attempt further elucidation; but I should think it unpardonable not to mention what I have myself heard, though I cannot vouch for its truth. The story which was told to Condorcet by Voltaire, and by Condorcet to a gentleman of high birth and character, from whom I received it, is this:—that her attachment was not to Pope, or to any Englishman of inferior degree, but to a young French prince of the blood royal, Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Berry, whom, in early youth, she had met at the court of France. The verses certainly seem unintelligible, unless they allude to some connection to which her highest hopes, though nobly connected herself, could not aspire. What other sense can be given to these words:

> Why bade ye else, ye pow'rs, her soul aspire
> Above the vulgar flight of low desire?
> Ambition first sprung from your bless'd abodes,
> The glorious fault of angels and of gods!

She was herself of a noble family, or there can be no meaning in the line,

> That once had beauty, *titles*, wealth and fame.

Under the idea here suggested, a greater propriety is given to the verse, which otherwise appears so tame and common-place,

> 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be.

It sufficiently appears from Pope's letter that she was of a wild and romantic disposition. She left her friends and country, and commenced a sentimental pursuit after the object in which her ambition and enthusiastic caprice had centered. Having alienated her rela-

Digitized by Google

tions by her wayward conduct, and being disappointed in the hopes she had formed, she retired voluntarily to a convent. Warton asserts that she was "forced" into a nunnery. This is expressly contrary to what Pope himself says in a letter to her: "If you are resolved in revenge to rob the world of so much example as you may afford it, I believe your design to be in vain; for, in a monastery, your devotions cannot carry you so far towards the next world, as to make this lose sight of you." It is most probable that incipient lunacy was the cause of her perverted feelings, and untimely end. Johnson says, "poetry has been seldom worse employed than in dignifying the amorous fury of a raving girl." This seems severe, contemptuous, and unfeeling. Johnson, however, chiefly adverted, I imagine, to the false reasoning and absurd attempt in the lines "Is there no bright," &c., to make suicide the natural consequence of more elevated feelings. Johnson spoke as a severe moralist, and a rigid philosopher, against such contemptible reasoning as Pope employs upon this subject from the fifth to the twenty-second verse. Having been, as might naturally be expected from his superior understanding, disgusted with the reasoning part of the poem, the gentler touches of fancy and tenderness were lost, if I may say so, on him. He would turn with disdain from such images as—

There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow;

or perhaps exclaim, as upon another occasion, *Incredulus odi*. Notwithstanding, however, his severity, the animated passages of this poem, "But thou, false guardian," &c., and the lines of tenderness and poetic fancy interspersed, cannot be read without sympathy. The verses "Yet shall thy grave," &c., are possibly too commonplace, but they are surely beautiful. If any expression might be objected to, perhaps it would be "silver" for "white" wings of an angel.—Bowles.

The Elegy, although produced at an early age, is not exceeded in pathos and true poetry by any production of its author. But whilst we admit the extraordinary powers displayed by the poet, we cannot but perceive that they are apparently employed to give a sanction to an act of criminality, and to inculcate principles which cannot be too cautiously guarded against. It must, however, be observed, that this piece is not to be judged of by the common rules of criticism. It is, in fact, a spontaneous burst of indignation against the authors of the calamity which it records. Throughout the whole poem, the author speaks as if he were under a delusion, and utters sentiments which would be wholly unpardonable at other times. It is only in this light that we can excuse the violence of many of the expressions, which border on the very verge of impiety. The first line of the

Digitized by Google

poem demonstrates that he is no longer under the control of reason. He sees the ghost of the person whom he so highly admired and loved. The "visionary sword" gleams before his eyes, and in the excess of his grief he perceives nothing but what is great and noble in the act that terminated her life. This impassioned strain is continued till his anger is turned against the author of her sufferings, when it is poured out in one of the most terrific passages which poetry, either ancient or modern, can exhibit,—a passage in which indignation and revenge seem to absorb every other feeling, and to involve not only the offender, but all who are connected with him, in indiscriminate destruction. Nor is this sufficient—their destruction must be the cause of exultation to others, and they are to become the objects of insult and abhorrence—

There passengers shall stand, and pointing say, &c.

Compassion at length succeeds to resentment, and pity to terror. The poet in some degree assumes his own character, and his feelings are expressed in language of the deepest affection and tenderness, which impresses itself indelibly on the memory of the reader. The concluding lines, whilst they display the ardour of real passion, demonstrate how greatly the author was attached to the art he professed; *that*, and his affection for the object of his grief, could only expire together;

The Muse forgot, and thou beloved no more.—Roscom.

This poem first appeared in the quarto of 1717, where it bore the title of "Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady." In the edition of 1736, "Elegy" was substituted for "Verses." The earliest historical account of the heroine was given by William Ayre, Esq., in a miserable compilation called Memoirs of Pope, which is full of extravagant fictions and blunders.[1] This wretched book-maker has merely turned the incidents of the poem into prose, and amplified them in the process. His narrative would be unworthy of notice if it had not been adopted by Ruffhead, who borrowed, without acknowledgment, the statements, and, in the main, the very language of Ayre. The authority of Ruffhead's work is entirely due to the fact, that it was in part drawn up from manuscripts supplied by Warburton, and was subsequently revised by him. The copy corrected by the bishop contains no note on the pages which record the fate of

[1] The Memoirs by Ayre appeared in 1745, without the name of the publisher. In a pamphlet which was printed the same year, under the title of Remarks on Squire Ayre's Memoirs, it is stated that the work was put together, and published by Curll, who being notorious for the manufacture of vapid, lying biographies, suppressed a name which would have been fatal to the sale of his trash.

Digitized by Google

the unfortunate lady. It does not follow that he knew the particulars to be true because he has not declared them to be false. He was probably ignorant on the subject, and unable either to confirm or confute the story. Dr. Johnson was in the same position. "The lady's name and adventures," he says, in his Life of Pope, "I have sought with fruitless inquiry. I can, therefore, tell no more than I have learned from Mr. Ruffhead, who writes with the confidence of one who could trust his information." The trust was fallacious. Ruffhead, an uncritical transcriber, a blind man led by the blind, was deceived by a transparent impostor who, in default of facts, embellished the hints in Pope's verse. His style of invention is emblazoned in the last sentence of his narrative when he says, that "the priesthood would have buried the lady in the highway, but it seems their power there did not extend so far." The law of England till the reign of George IV. ordained that a suicide, unless irresponsible from insanity, should be interred in the highway, and a stake driven through the body. Pope, in his poem, only spoke of "unpaid rites," whence Ayre, alias Curll, concluded that the law of the place did not sanction road-burial. Familiar, however, with the English notion he transfers it to the priests of a locality where the usage, by his own confession, did not exist.

Nearly half a century after the death of the poet, Hawkins and Warton, who evidently derived their statements from a common source, produced a legend, which instead of being drawn from the elegy is directly opposed to it. Pope says that the unfortunate lady destroyed herself with a sword, Warton that she put an end to her life with a rope; Pope says that she had beauty, Warton that she was deformed: Pope says that she had titles, Warton that she was simply one Wainsbury; Pope says that she had fame, and Warton has quoted a name so obscure that nobody has been able to discover her lineage, her connections, her residence, or that she was ever known to a single human being of the time. The Warton form of the romance has been jotted down by the Duchess of Portland in her note book, from which it appears that the narrators did not agree among themselves; for Warton declares that the lady was beloved by Pope; the duchess that Pope was beloved by the lady, and that he did not return her affection. In his Essay on the Genius of Pope, Warton states that her first suitor was the Duke of Buckingham, that on his deserting her she retired into a convent in France, and that her retreat into a nunnery prompted the poet, "who had conceived a violent passion for her," to express his feelings in the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard.[2] The Duke of Buckingham, on March 16, 1705, married his third wife, who survived him. The tone and details of the Elegy

[2] Warton's Essay, 5th ed. vol. i. p. 329.

Digitized by Google

forbid the notion that it could have been written on a cast-off mistress of the duke, and the incidents must, therefore, have occurred before March 16, 1705, when Pope was barely sixteen years and ten months old. The fable thus requires us to suppose that the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard was the production of a lad of seventeen, that it was composed several years before the translation of the letters existed from which he has borrowed a considerable part of the phraseology as well as the ideas, and that his virulent denunciation of the "false guardian," was for not allowing a ward "with beauty, titles, wealth, and fame," to wed the son of a linen-draper,—a mere boy without money, reputation, or prospects, and who was deformed and stunted in an extreme degree.

In 1806, Bowles promulgated a tradition which contradicts the representations both of Ayre and Warton. The hero of Warton is Pope himself; the hero of Bowles is the Duke of Berry. The heroine of Warton in one version, for he is not consistent, was forced into a convent; and the heroine of Bowles withdrew there of her own accord. The unfortunate lady of Ayre and Ruffhead is driven abroad by her uncle, that she may be weaned from an English attachment; the unfortunate lady of Bowles falls in love with a foreigner on the continent; the lady of Ayre and Ruffhead is thwarted in her matrimonial schemes because she has fixed her heart upon a person beneath her; and the lady of Bowles is reduced to despair because she aspires to the hand of a person above her. Bowles maintains that the latter view must be received or the Elegy is unintelligible. Johnson has shown that the Elegy is contradictory, and if the verses which represent the lady's fate to have been the consequence of her ambition favours the theory that she was enamoured of some superior in rank, the passage which represents the uncle as steeling his heart against his niece out of pride equally favours the rival hypothesis that she was devoted to an inferior.

At variance in nearly every particular, the conflicting histories of the unfortunate lady have the common quality, that they are unsupported by a single circumstance which could warrant the smallest measure of belief. Bowles heard his version, for which he declined to vouch, from an unnamed gentleman, who heard it from Condorcet, who heard it from Voltaire, who heard it nobody knows where. Ayre and the rest cite no witnesses whatever, for the obvious reason that they had none of any value to cite. The only accounts which give the lady's name report it differently, and not one of the investigators of her story,—not even Warton after his "many and wide enquiries,"—can tell us where she was born or died, or where she lived, or to whom she was related or known. The veriest phantom that ever flitted in darkness before the eye of credulous superstition could not be more illusive and impalpable.

Digitized by Google

The biographers and editors who went about enquiring after the unfortunate lady had no suspicion that she might be altogether a poetical invention, nor could they have shown that here was the solution of the mystery unless they had been in possession of the Caryll correspondence. Pope, in a posthumous note, which was published by Warburton, directs us to the letters to several ladies at p. 206 of the quarto edition, for the indications that the unfortunate lady of the Elegy was also the heroine of the Duke of Buckingham's Verses to a Lady designing to retire into a Monastery. There are no letters to ladies at p. 206 of the quarto, but some are inserted from p. 86 to p. 95, and 206 is a palpable misprint for 86, where, in conformity with the title of the duke's poem, we have a letter to a lady who was meditating a retreat to a convent. The preceding letter is addressed to Mr. Caryll, and, in the table of contents, is said to be "Concerning an unfortunate lady." The letter which relates to the monastic project is said, in the table of contents, to be "To the same lady," and thence it appears that the lady who thought of withdrawing to a nunnery was the same unfortunate lady who was the subject of the letter to Caryll. From the Caryll correspondence we discover that she was the wife of John Weston, Esq., of Sutton, in the county of Surrey; but, instead of dying by her own hand in a foreign country, she died a natural death in her native land on the 18th of October, 1724, several years after the poet had commemorated the suicide of the unfortunate lady.[1] It follows that he has falsely represented the unfortunate lady of his letters to have been the same individual with the unfortunate lady of the Elegy, and since he was driven to conjure up a fictitious victim we may be sure that there was no real victim in the case. This explains Pope's omission to answer Caryll's inquiry who the unfortunate lady was;[2] this explains why the tragical death of a woman "with beauty, titles, wealth, and fame," was unknown to her contemporaries; this explains why the histories of her differ from each other, and why in every one of them she remains a shadowy being whose very existence cannot be traced; this explains why, as Johnson observes, it is not easy to make out from the poem the character of either the heroine or her guardian: and this accounts for the contradictions which have crept into the Elegy. Pope adopted the

[1] Pope's Correspondence, ed. Elwin, vol. i., pp. 144, 158—160, 162.

[2] "Pray in your next," writes Caryll to Pope, July 16, 1717, "tell me who was the unfortunate lady you address a copy of verses to. I think you once gave me her history, but it is now quite out of my head." Pope, in his reply, does not allude to the subject, and Caryll says to him on Aug. 18, "You answer not my question who the unfortunate lady was that you inscribe a copy of verses to in your book. I long to be re-told her story, for I believe you already told me formerly; but I shall refer that, and a thousand other things more, to chat over at our next meeting, which I hope draws near." This letter was answered by Pope on Aug. 22, but there is still not a word on the unfortunate lady.

Digitized by Google

common incident of a miserable girl having recourse to self-destruction, and he wished to have it believed that he had a personal interest in her fate. His disposition to talk of himself in his poetry has been noticed by Johnson. Windsor Forest, the Essay on Criticism, the Temple of Fame, the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, and the Rape of the Lock, all ended egotistically. The Elegy was an inviting occasion for the indulgence of his propensity. He had got, as he thought, a romantic heroine, and yielding to the temptation to blend his name with her story, he wound up his verses with the celebration of his devoted attachment to her. He laid the scene of her death abroad to account for English ignorance of the tragedy, and he endeavoured to authenticate the fable for posterity by a posthumous note which involved the assumption that the unfortunate lady of his letters was the same lady commemorated in his poem. The note which was designed to accredit the tale has answered the opposite purpose, and convicted him of a puerile deception, not the mere impulse of youthful vanity, but renewed on the brink of the grave, with a final sense of satisfaction in propping up and perpetuating the petty fraud.

The supposition that the story was true has seduced Warton, Wakefield, and Roscoe into some weak critical fancies. Warton thinks the Elegy the most pathetic of Pope's writings, and says "that the cause of its excellence is that the occasion of it was real." Wakefield remarks that the text of the latest edition does not differ from the earliest, and conjectures that "the author's interest in the subject rendered the poem too affecting for his own perusal." Roscoe, to excuse the principles inculcated in the piece, alleges that it was "a spontaneous burst of indignation," and that "the first line demonstrates that Pope was no longer under the control of reason." Similar causes have dissimilar effects. Unfortunate ladies who are "no longer under the control of reason" are prone to stab or hang themselves. When Pope is "no longer under the control of reason" he sits down and writes an elegy which Roscoe says "is not exceeded in pathos and true poetry by any production of its author." Had the grief been as genuine as it was imaginary the apology is manifestly futile; for the man whose mind is sufficiently calm to permit him to sing his woes in polished verse, must have passed beyond the stage when he is incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. The plea might have justified the sentiments in a drama where the speaker was represented as pouring out his feelings while the calamity was fresh, but in an elegy the poet embodies his own opinions at the time of composition, and the bad morality becomes deliberate doctrine.

Vague and sounding verse could not lend a momentary speciousness to the sophistries of the Elegy. That the transgression of the angels was ambition is a common, though an unauthorised idea. That their sin was "glorious" is a notion peculiar to Pope. This

Digitized by Google

"glorious fault" they infused into the unfortunate lady and "bade her soul aspire." The particular aspiration they suggested to her was to marry out of her sphere; her lofty ambition was an inordinate desire to make a good worldly match. Thwarted in the magnanimous purpose of her life, she had the second great merit of an heroic death; for to commit suicide was, in Pope's opinion, "to think greatly," "to die bravely," "to act a Roman's part." The exalted representation will not stand before the annals of suicide. They bear daily witness that self-destruction is the refuge of diseased, weak, pusillanimous, conscience-stricken minds.[1] The want of fortitude is proportioned to the slightness of the disaster which prompts the deed. What is remediable may be more readily endured than what cannot be cured, and there could be no stronger mark of a childish, self-indulgent, unhealthy character, without force or dignity, the slave of impulse, than that a woman should be guilty of suicide because her guardian refused his consent to an unequal marriage. There might be much room for pity; there could be none for admiration. The strength of affection which could be the only redeeming element is eliminated by the poet who, in this part of the Elegy, resolves the lady's love into the ignoble craving to marry into a higher station than her own. Her worldly disposition is the evidence to Pope that she had "a purer spirit" than such "kindred dregs" as had not sufficient grandeur of mind to worship rank. Out of compassion for her superiority "fate snatched her early away" that she might not be doomed to associate with the "dull souls" who love their equals, and bear their trials with resignation.

The opening lines of the Elegy have some of the indefiniteness which Johnson censured in the portrayal of the lady and her guardian. A female ghost with a gored and bleeding bosom, and bearing a visionary sword, beckons the poet to go with her into a glade. For what purpose does she beckon him? The apparition may be sup-

[1] Dr. Morell, in his notes to Seneca's Epistles, says, "I remember when I was a boy at Eton that an old almswoman, Mrs. Pain, having been cut down alive, gave this reason for hanging herself, that she was afraid of dying." To rush into death from the fear of death is not uncommon, and shows how far suicide is from being an evidence of superior courage. Acute philosophers have not always reasoned better than Pope. M. Lerminier, a French writer of repute, eulogises, in his Philosophie du Droit, the suicide of Cato for "a pure and majestic act." "In the Memoirs of the Emperor's Valet," he says in the next sentence, "we learn that Napoleon tried to destroy himself at Fontainebleau in 1814. He took poison; remedies were applied, and he recovered. He was not to die thus. Would you wish that Napoleon's end should have been that of an amorous sub-lieutenant, or a ruined banker?" But this was the veritable end of Cato. He died the death o "amorous sub-lieutenants and ruined bankers." The question of M. Lerminier revealed his consciousness that suicide was not heroism, or, in justification of the attempt of the Emperor, he would have asked, "Would you not have wished that Napoleon's end should have been the pure and majestic end of Cato?"

Digitized by Google

posed to be the creature of a heated imagination, but there should be some significance in the act ascribed to her. The ghost of the King of Denmark did not beckon Horatio or the sentinels. It passed by them with "a slow and stately march," and made no sign, till Hamlet was present at its fourth appearance, and then

> It beckoned him to go away with it
> As if it some impartment did desire
> To him alone.

The ghost of the unfortunate lady imparted no information to Pope, for he avows his ignorance of everything relating to her ghostly condition. A passage in Milton's Comus, separated from the context, might seem to countenance the indiscriminate use of the epithet "beckoning," as if it were a general characteristic of spectres.

> A thousand fantasies
> Begin to throng into my memory,
> Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
> And airy tongues that syllable men's names
> On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.[1]

A superstition attached to "desert wildernesses," where the wanderer who lost sight of his associates could seldom strike into their track on the pathless waste, was made known to Milton by the travels of Marco Polo. "If," says the old Venetian, in his account of the great Asiatic desert, Lop or Gobi, "any one at night stays behind, or diverges from his company, he hears, when he wishes to rejoin it, spirits speaking in the air, who seem to be his comrades, and sometimes call him by his name, beguiling him out of the right road, so that many continue to go astray and perish."[2] The lady in Comus was in a like situation. She was benighted, she had lost her way, she heard "the tumult of loud mirth," and when she reached the spot from whence the merriment proceeded she found "nought but darkness." Then the "calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire," that lure poor wanderers to destruction, rushed into her thoughts, and she conceived she might be the dupe of malignant phantoms.[3] Pope's beckoning ghost was not of this class of "dire" counterfeit "shadows." She

[1] Comus, ver. 205.

[2] I Viaggi di Marco Polo, ed. Pasini, 1847, p. 45.

[3] A belief akin to that which grew up in deserts prevailed in England. Hamlet doubts whether his father's ghost is a "spirit of health or goblin damned," and Horatio attempts to dissuade Hamlet from following it lest it should prove to be an impostor. A "goblin damned" may have put on the "fair and warlike form" of the King of Denmark, may "tempt" Hamlet to the "dreadful summit of the cliff," may "there assume some other horrible form which might draw him into madness," and impel him to commit suicide. The radical idea is the same in Shakespeare and Marco Polo. Fiends personate the relations or friends of an intended victim that they may decoy him to his death.

Digitized by Google

is represented as an honest, sympathising spirit, who could never have designed to entice her lover or friend into the glade with a murderous intent. Warton quotes the commencement of Ben Jonson's Epitaph on Lady Winchester, which Pope must have had in his mind when he wrote his Elegy. The ghost beckoned Jonson to pluck a garland from the yew tree.[1] A spirit could not have revisited the world, for a more frivolous purpose, but at least the poet felt that he must assign a cause for the beckoning. The omission in Pope arose from a frequent source of misapplied language. Isolated lines and phrases, which had the sanction of classic authors, lingered in his memory, and he forgot the accompaniments to which they owed their fitness.

The spectacle of the bleeding ghost of the lady haunting the glade by moonlight suggests to the poet that she may be doing penance for her self-inflicted death. He reasons himself into the conviction that her violence was meritorious, and he concludes that she has been "snatched to the pitying sky." At ver. 47 comes a couplet in which the christian idea of a spirit in heaven is superseded by the pagan notion of an ever "injured shade" to whom nothing can compensate for the loss of the customary funereal rites. Out of his ambition to imitate classic poets Pope jumbled discordant creeds together, and introduced this remnant of an extinct mythology, absurd in itself and offensive in a modern elegy. The passage which follows, from ver. 51 to ver. 68, is the most pleasing part of the poem, though the ten lines from ver. 59 have been severely criticised by Lord Kames. Fictitious topics of consolation were not, he said, "the language of the heart, but of imagination indulging its flights at ease," and were incompatible with "the deeply serious and pathetic."[2] Warburton criticised the criticism. He said it "smelled furiously of old John Dennis," and Bowles allowed that it was "absurd." The tone of Lord Kames is, perhaps, too contemptuous, for the lines have a certain sweetness of sentiment. Yet he was right when he maintained that they were not in harmony with the professions of grief and indignation which follow or go before. All ages and nations have shared the conviction that the omnipotence behind the phenomena of nature deputes them on special occasions to speak in exceptional ways to the affections, hopes, and fears of man. In the rear of these beliefs are numerous cases in which appearances are accepted for a symbolical language, not with an absolute faith, but with a fond acquiescence because they are the just reflection of our thoughts. Wordsworth's exquisite Hart-leap Well,—perfect in its descriptive

[1] And beck'ning woos me, from the fatal tree
To pluck a garland for herself or me.

[2] Elements of Criticism, 6th ed., vol. i. p. 477.

Digitized by Google

power, its easy flow of beautiful English, and its mingled strains of animation and pathos—culminates in the creed that the bleakness of the once luxuriant enclosure in which the stag fell dead, is the protest of nature against the palace and bowers erected there by the knight in exultant commemoration of his cruel chase. Wide is the range in this domain of poetry, from sublimity down to prettinesses, from prettinesses to poor conceits. What is legitimate in itself may be wrongly placed, and here is the fault of Pope's lines. Amid the tempest of sorrow and anger he derives consolation from the notion that the first roses of the year will blow on the grave of the unfortunate lady, that the earliest dew-drops of the morning will weep her loss, that the turf will lie light on her insensate corpse, and that angels will overshadow in perpetuity the spot of earth which conceals it. The reveries of fancy may gratify the tranquil mind. They would be mockery to a man absorbed by terrible realities, to a man distracted by the suicide of the woman he adored.

The paragraph, "So peaceful rests," was much admired by the stone-cutters, and with tasteless ignorance they engraved it, slightly modified, upon hundreds of tombstones. No one in a churchyard requires to be reminded that its buried population is "a heap of dust." Amid the visible signs of mortality monuments should soothe and lift up the mind by speaking of that which is not corruptible—of that which was best in the acts, disposition, endurance, and belief of the dead, or of the contrast between the earthly life that was and the life that is, between the transitory and the immortal. Improper for an epitaph, the lines were not unsuited to an elegy, if the final paragraph had opened up a brighter vista instead of dropping into the lowest style of heathenism. The affection of the elegy-writer was to cease with the "idle business" of life, and the dearest object of his heart would be "beloved by him no more." He had talked of "pale ghosts," and "bright reversions in the skies," but by the time he got to the conclusion of his poetical exercise, skies, and ghosts had faded from his thoughts, and his language would leave the impression that the "last gasp" was the end of all things. In composition the Elegy is terse and powerful; the ideas are erroneous, inconsistent, or inadequate. Pagan and christian notions clash together; the story is represented under contradictory phases; the dreary close of the poem sets aside the faith which consoles survivors; the sentiments at the beginning are false and melodramatic; and the middle, though not devoid of tenderness, chiefly consists of borrowed fictions, which are too artificial for the occasion.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ELEGY

TO THE MEMORY OF

AN UNFORTUNATE LADY.

WHAT beck'ning ghost,[1] along the moon-light shade
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
'Tis she!—but why that bleeding bosom gored?[2]
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?
Oh ever beauteous, ever friendly! tell,
Is it, in heav'n, a crime to love too well?[3]
To bear too tender, or too firm a heart,
To act a lover's or a Roman's part?
Is there no bright reversion in the sky,
For those who greatly think, or bravely die?
Why bade ye else, ye pow'rs! her soul aspire
Above the vulgar flight of low desire?
Ambition first sprung from your bless'd abodes;
The glorious fault of angels[4] and of gods:

[1] Ben Jonson's Elegy on the Marchioness of Winchester:

What gentle ghost besprent with April dew,
Hails me so solemnly to yonder yew?
And beck'ning woos me?—WARTON.

[2] Johnson gives two meanings for "to gore,"—"to stab," "to pierce;" and "to pierce with a horn." The second, or special signification, has since superseded the general sense in popular usage, though, as with many other words, a sense which has become obsolete in conversation is occasionally revived in books. Formerly, the general sense of "to pierce," without reference to the mode of piercing, was the predominant meaning, and Milton, Par. Lost, vi. 386, employed the word to denote the gaps made in the ranks of a defeated army:

the battle swerved
With many an inroad gored.

[3] The third Elegy of Crashaw:

And I, what is my crime, I cannot tell,
Unless it be a crime t' have loved too well.
—STEVENS.

[4] Shakespeare, Henry VIII. Act iii. Sc. 2:

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition;
By that sin fell the angels.

Digitized by Google

Thence to their images on earth it flows,
And in the breasts of kings and heroes glows.
Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,
Dull sullen pris'ners in the body's cage: [1]
Dim lights of life, that burn a length of years
Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres;
Like Eastern kings a lazy state they keep,
And, close confined to their own palace, sleep.[2]
From these perhaps (ere nature bade her die)
Fate snatched her early to the pitying sky.
As into air the purer spirits flow,
And sep'rate from their kindred dregs below;
So flew the soul to its congenial place,
Nor left one virtue to redeem her race.[3]
But thou, false guardian of a charge too good,[4]
Thou mean deserter of thy brother's blood!
See on these ruby lips the trembling breath,
These cheeks now fading at the blast of death;
Cold is that breast which warmed the world before,[5]
And those love-darting eyes[6] must roll no more.[7]
Thus, if eternal justice rules the ball,
Thus shall your wives, and thus your children fall:
On all the line a sudden vengeance waits,
And frequent hearses shall besiege your gates;

[1] Dryden, To the Duchess of Ormond:

And where imprisoned in so sweet a cage
A soul might well be pleased to pass an age.

[2] Cowley has a couplet not unlike his, Davideis, i. 80:

Where their vast court the mother-waters keep,
And undisturbed by moons in silence sleep.
—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Duke's translation of Juvenal, Sat. iv.:

Without one virtue to redeem his fame.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Dryden, Ovid's Amor. ii. 19:

But thou dull husband of a wife too fair.—
WAKEFIELD.

[5] Lord Kames objects to the false antithesis between cold flesh and mental warmth.

[6] Milton, Comus, ver. 753:

Love-darting eyes or tresses like the morn.
—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Rolling eyes are contrary to the English idea of feminine refinement. Pope admired them. He had previously said in the Rape of the Lock, Cant. v. 33,

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll.

Digitized by Google

There passengers shall stand, and pointing say,
(While the long fun'rals blacken all the way)
"Lo! these were they, whose souls the furies steeled,
"And cursed with hearts unknowing how to yield." [1]
Thus unlamented pass the proud away,
The gaze of fools, and pageant of a day!
So perish all, whose breast ne'er learned to glow
For others' good, or melt at others' woe.[2]
What can atone, oh ever-injured shade!
Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid?
No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
Pleased thy pale ghost, or graced thy mournful bier.
By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,[3]
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,[4]

Wakefield mentions that the phrase "unknowing how to yield" is used by Dryden, Æneis, xi. 472, and that the entire couplet is almost identical with two passages in Pope's own translation of the Iliad. The first is at Book ix. 749. The second is at Book xxii. 447, and runs thus:

The furies that relentless breast have steeled
And cursed thee with a heart that cannot yield.

[2] From a fragment of Sir Edward Hungerford, according to a writer in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1764:

The soul by pure religion taught to glow
At others' good, or melt at others' woe.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Dryden, Æneis, ix. 647, where the mother of Euryalus laments her son, whose body remains with the enemy:

Nor was I near to close his dying eyes,
To wash his wounds, to weep his obsequies.
—WAKEFIELD.

The cruelties of the lady's relations, the desolation of the family, the being deprived of the rights of sepulture, the circumstance of dying in a country remote from her relations, are all touched with great tenderness and pathos, particularly the four lines from the 51st, "By foreign hands," &c.—WARTON.

[4] The anonymous translator of Ariadne to Theseus:

Poor Ariadne! thou must perish here,
Breathe out thy soul in strange and hated air,
Nor see thy pitying mother shed one tear;
Want a kind hand, which thy fixed eyes may close,
And thy stiff limbs may decently compose.

So Gay in his Dione, Act ii. Sc. 1:

What pious care my ghastful lid shall close?
What decent hand my frozen limbs compose.—WAKEFIELD.

De Quincey assumes that the term "decent limbs" refers to the lady's shape, and he remarks that the language "does not imply much enthusiasm of praise." Pope had perhaps the same idea in his mind as the translator he imitated, and "thy decent limbs were composed" may be put inaccurately for "thy limbs were composed decently."

Digitized by Google

By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned!
What though no friends in sable weeds appear,
Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn[1] a year,
And bear about the mockery of woe
To midnight dances, and the public show?
What though no weeping loves thy ashes grace,
Nor polished marble emulate thy face?
What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
Nor hallowed dirge be muttered o'er thy tomb?
Yet shall thy grave with rising flow'rs be dressed,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:[2]
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow;
While angels with their silver wings[3] o'ershade
The ground, now sacred[4] by thy reliques made.[5]

[1] The poet in the previous couplet has employed the word "mourn" to signify genuine regret. In this verse it is put for the act of wearing mourning,—the appearing in the "sable weeds," which are "the mockery of woe" when the sorrow is not real.

[2] Dryden, Virg. Ecl. x. 51:

How light would lie the turf upon my breast.

A. Philips in his third Pastoral:

The flow'ry turf lie light upon thy breast.

This thought was common with the ancients.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Tasso's description of an angel in the translation of Fairfax, i. 14:

Of silver wings he took a shining pair
Fringed with gold.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] The expression has reference to ver. 61. "No sacred earth allowed her room," but her remains have "made sacred" the common earth in which she was buried.

[5] Such a poem as Pope's Elegy, deeply serious and pathetic, rejects with disdain all fiction. Upon that account the passage from ver. 59 to ver. 68 deserves no quarter; for it is not the language of the heart, but of the imagination indulging its flights at ease, and by that means is eminently discordant with the subject. It would be a still more severe censure if it should be ascribed to imitation, copying indiscreetly what has been said by others.—LORD KAMES.

The ghost of the injured person appears to excite the poet to revenge her wrongs. He describes her character, execrates the author of her misfortunes, expatiates on the severity of her fate, the rites of sepulture denied her in a foreign land. Then follows, "What though no weeping," &c. Can anything be more naturally pathetic? Yet the critic tells us he can give no quarter to this part of the poem. Well might our poet's last wish be to commit his writings to the candour of a sensible and reflecting judge, rather than to the malice of every short-sighted and malevolent critic.—WARBURTON.

Digitized by Google

So peaceful rests, without a stone, a name,
What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.
How loved, how honoured once, avails thee not,
To whom related, or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be![1]
Poets themselves must fall like those they sung,
Deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.[2]
Ev'n he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,
Shall shortly want the gen'rous tear he pays;
Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart,
Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
The muse forgot, and thou beloved no more!

[1] When Pope describes the retribution which is to fall upon the imperious relatives of the unfortunate lady, he says,

Thus unlamented pass the proud away;

and it is to these same relations, whose pride was their vice, that he reverts in the line,

'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be.

The persecutors who have hunted you into the grave, shall one day share your fate.

[2] R. Herrick, in a Meditation for his Mistress:

You are the queen all flow'rs among,
But die you must, fair maid, ere long,
As he, the maker of this song.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

Digitized by Google

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

Written by Mr. Pope.

The second edition, 8vo.

London: Printed for Bernard Lintot, at the Cross-keys between the Temple Gates in Fleet Street. 1720.

The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard first appeared in the quarto of 1717. The second edition was accompanied by other poems on kindred subjects—"Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady; Florelio, a Pastoral, lamenting the Death of the late Marquis of Blandford, by Mr. Fenton; Upon the Death of her Husband, by Mrs. Elizabeth Singer; A Ballad, by Mr. Gay,—'Twas when the Seas were roaring;' and Richy and Sandy, a Pastoral on the Death of Mr. Joseph Addison, by Allan Ramsay." The Epistle was reprinted in Lintot's Miscellany in 1720, 1722, 1727, and 1732. In the Miscellany of 1727 there was added for the first time a motto from Prior's Alma:

O Abelard ill-fated youth!
Thy fate will justify this truth;
But well I weet, thy cruel wrong
Adorns a nobler poet's song:
Dan Pope, for thy misfortune grieved,
With kind concern and skill has weaved
A silken web, and ne'er shall fade
Its colours; gently has he laid
The mantle o'er thy sad distress,
And Venus shall the texture bless.
He o'er the weeping nun has drawn
Such artful folds of sacred lawn,
That Love, with equal grief and pride,
Shall see the crime he strives to hide,
And softly drawing back the veil,
The god shall to his vot'ries tell
Each conscious tear, each blushing grace
That decked dear Eloisa's face.

Lord Bathurst told Warton that Pope was not pleased with these lines, in which the poet is accused of palliating Eloisa's guilt, and complimented for the skill with which he did it; but we learn from a letter of Pope to Christopher Pitt that he himself corrected the sheets of his own pieces in the Miscellany of 1727, and if the passage from Prior had been distasteful to him, he would not have prefixed it to the Epistle. The motto was repeated in the Miscellany of 1732, and was omitted by him in the later editions of his works.

Digitized by Google

Of the Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard I do not know the date. Pope's first inclination to attempt a composition of that tender kind arose, as Mr. Savage told me, from his perusal of Prior's Nut-brown Maid. How much he has surpassed Prior's work it is not necessary to mention, when perhaps it may be said with justice that he has excelled every composition of the same kind. The mixture of religious hope and resignation gives an elevation and dignity to disappointed love which images merely natural cannot bestow. The gloom of a convent strikes the imagination with far greater force than the solitude of a grove. This piece was, however, not much his favourite in his latter years, though I never heard upon what principle he slighted it. The Epistle is one of the most happy productions of human wit. The subject is so judiciously chosen that it would be difficult, in turning over the annals of the world, to find another which so many circumstances concur to recommend. We regularly interest ourselves most in the fortunes of those who most deserve our notice; Abelard and Eloisa were conspicuous in their days for eminence of merit. The heart naturally loves truth; the adventures and misfortunes of this illustrious pair are known from undisputed history. Their fate does not leave the mind in hopeless dejection, for they both found quiet and consolation in retirement and piety. So new and so affecting is their story that it supersedes invention, and imagination ranges at full liberty without straggling into scenes of fable. The story thus skilfully adopted, has been diligently improved. Pope has left nothing behind him which seems more the effect of studious perseverance and laborious revisal. Here is particularly observable the *curiosa felicitas*, a fruitful soil and careful cultivation. Here is no crudeness of sense, nor asperity of language.—JOHNSON.

Of all stories, ancient or modern, there is not, perhaps, a more proper one to furnish out an elegiac epistle than that of Eloisa and Abelard. Their distresses were of a most singular and peculiar kind, and their names sufficiently known, but not grown trite or common by too frequent usage. Pope was a most excellent improver, if no great original inventor, and we see how finely he has worked up the hints of distress that are scattered up and down in Abelard and Eloisa's letters, and in a little French history of their lives and misfortunes. Abelard was reputed the most handsome, as well as the most learned man, of his time, according to the kind of learning then in vogue. An old chronicle, quoted by Andrew du Chesne, informs us, that scholars flocked to his lectures from all quarters of the Latin

Digitized by Google

world ; and his contemporary, St. Bernard, relates, that he numbered among his disciples many principal ecclesiastics and cardinals at the court of Rome. Abelard himself boasts, that when he retired into the country, he was followed by such immense crowds of scholars that they could get neither lodgings nor provisions sufficient for them. He met with the fate of many learned men, to be embroiled in controversy, and accused of heresy ; for St. Bernard, whose influence and authority were very great, got his opinion of the Trinity condemned at a council held at Sens, 1140. But the talents of Abelard were not confined to theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and the thorny paths of scholasticism. He gave proofs of a lively genius by many poetical performances, insomuch that he was reputed to be the author of the famous Romance of the Rose, which, however, was indisputably written by John of Meun, a little city on the banks of the Loire, about four miles from Orleans. It was he who continued and finished the Romance of the Rose, which William de Lorris had left imperfect forty years before. There is undoubted evidence that [the earliest portion] was written an hundred years after Abelard flourished, and if chronology did not absolutely contradict the notion of his being the author of this very celebrated piece, yet are there internal arguments sufficient to confute it. There are many severe and satirical strokes on the character of Eloisa which the pen of Abelard never would have given. In one passage she is introduced speaking with indecency and obscenity ; in another all the vices and bad qualities of women are represented as assembled together in her alone :

> Qui les mœurs féminins savoit
> Car tres-tous en soi les avoit.

In a very old epistle dedicatory, addressed to Philip IV. of France by this same John of Meun, and prefixed to a French translation of Boetius, it appears that he also translated the epistles of Abelard to Heloisa, which were in high vogue at the court. It is to be regretted that we have no exact picture of the person and beauty of Eloisa. Abelard himself says that she was "facie non infima."[1] Her extraordinary learning many circumstances concur to confirm ; particularly one, which is, that the nuns of the Paraclete are wont to have the office of Whitsunday read to them in Greek, to perpetuate the memory of her understanding that language. A lady learned as was Eloisa in that age, who indisputably understood the Latin, Greek,

[1] Dean Milman, in his History of Latin Christianity, says that Heloisa "was distinguished for her surpassing beauty." There is no authority for this assertion, which is one of the embellishments of later romancers.

Digitized by Google

and Hebrew tongues, was a kind of prodigy.[1] Her literature, says Abelard, "in toto regno nominatissimam fecerat," and we may be sure more thoroughly attached him to her. Bussy Rabutin speaks in high terms of commendation of the purity of Eloisa's latinity,—a judgment worthy a French count. There is a force but not an elegance in her style, which is blemished, as might be expected, by many phrases unknown to the pure ages of the Roman language, and by many Hebraisms borrowed from the translation of the Bible.

However happy and judicious the subject of Pope's Epistle may be thought to be, as displaying the various conflicts and tumults between duty and pleasure, between penitence and passion, that agitated the mind of Eloisa, yet we must candidly own that the principal circumstance of distress is of so indelicate a nature, that it is with difficulty disguised by the exquisite art and address of the poet. The capital and unrivalled beauties of the poem arise from the striking images and descriptions of the convent, and from the sentiments drawn from the mystical books of devotion, particularly Madame Guion, and the Archbishop of Cambray.[2] The Epistle is on the whole, one of the most highly finished, and certainly the most interesting of the pieces of our author; and, together with the Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, is the only instance of the pathetic Pope has given us. I think one may venture to remark that the reputation of Pope as a poet among posterity will be principally owing to his Windsor Forest, his Rape of the Lock, and his Eloisa to Abelard, whilst the facts and characters alluded to and exposed in his later writings, will be forgotten and unknown, and their poignancy and propriety little relished. For wit and satire are transitory and perishable, but nature and passion are eternal.—WARTON.

Pope must be judged according to the rank in which he stands,—among those of the French school, not the Italian; among those whose delineations are taken more from manners than from nature. When I say that this is his predominant character, I must be insensible to everything exquisite in poetry if I did not except the Epistle to Eloisa; but this can only be considered according to its class, and if I say that it seems to me superior to any other of the kind to which it might fairly be compared, such as the Epistles of Ovid, Propertius,

[1] "She knew Latin," says M. Rémusat, "and wrote it with facility and talent. As to Greek and Hebrew I can hardly believe that she was acquainted with more than the alphabet, and a few words which were quoted habitually in theology or in philosophy." The treatises of Abelard prove that he could read neither Greek nor Hebrew, and it is not likely that Heloisa was more learned than her master. Latin was the literary language of the day.

[2] The sentiments which Warton imagined to be borrowed from Madame Guion and Fenelon were taken from the English translation of the Letters of Heloisa and Abelard. Kindred thoughts may be found in the works of almost any devotional writer.

Digitized by Google

Tibullus (I will not mention Drayton, and Pope's numerous subsequent Imitations)—but when this transcendent poem is compared with those which will bear the comparison, I shall not be deemed as giving reluctant praise, when I declare my conviction of its being infinitely superior to everything of the kind, ancient or modern. In this poem, therefore, Pope appears on the high ground of the poet of nature, but this certainly is not his general character. In the particular instance of this poem how distinguished and superior does he stand. It is sufficient that nothing of the kind has ever been produced equal to it for pathos, painting, and melody. The mellifluence and solemn cadence of the verse, the dramatic transitions, the judicious contrasts, the language of genuine passion, uttered in the sweetest flow of music, and the pervading solemnity and grandeur of the picturesque scenery, give the Epistle a wonderful charm, and exemplify Pope's observation in his Essay on Criticism, "there is a *happiness* as well as care." The inherent indelicacy of the subject is one objection to it, and who but must lament its immoral effect, for of its beauty there can be but one sentiment. It may be said of it with truth in the language of its author:

> It lives, it breathes, it speaks what love inspires,
> Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires;

and as long as the English language remains, it will

> Call down tears through every age.

Pope I have no doubt wrote the Epistle to Sappho, and this of Eloisa, under the impression of strong personal feelings. It is supposed the subject was suggested by the unfortunate young lady going into a convent, whose untimely death occasioned the beautiful Elegy, "What beck'ning ghost;" but I cannot help thinking the real circumstance that occasioned these touching effusions was his early attachment to Lady Mary W. Montagu. The concluding lines allude to her, as I think is evident from his letter. Speaking of a volume he had sent her when abroad, he adds, "Among the rest you have all I am worth, that is, my works. There are few things in them but what you have already seen, except the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, in which you will find one passage that I cannot tell whether to wish you should understand or not." The lines could not be meant for the unfortunate lady, for she was dead and forgotten—could not relate to Martha Blount, for he was not "condemned whole years in absence to deplore," and therefore they could be addressed only to Lady Mary; and "he best shall paint them who shall feel them most," was a direct allusion to his own ardent but hopeless passion.—Bowles.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Bowles has represented the Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard as being of an immoral tendency. It must however be observed, that if this construction be put upon the poem, it is what the author never intended. On the contrary, his object is to show the fatal consequences of an ungovernable passion; and if he has done this in natural and even glowing language, it must be remembered that such are not his own sentiments, but those of the person he has undertaken to represent, and are in general given in nearly her own words. That many expressions and passages may be pointed out which are inconsistent with the established order and regulations of society, may be fully admitted. Such, for instance, as the lines

> How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I said,
> Curse on all laws but those which love has made!

But surely it is not likely that such sentiments can impose upon the weakest and most inexperienced minds. It is indeed highly probable that Pope has in some few instances intentionally exaggerated the sentiments and expressions of Eloisa in order to render it impossible for any person of common capacity to be misled by such statements. —Roscoe.

In 1693 there appeared at the Hague a French translation of the Latin letters of Abelard and Heloisa. The work was several times reprinted, and a later editor, M. Du Bois, informs the reader that the translator had taken the liberty to omit, to add, and to transpose at his pleasure. "Some of the thoughts and expressions which are ascribed to Heloisa," continues M. Du Bois, "are so well imagined that if we are disappointed at not finding them in the original, and at her not having said the things she has been made to say, we are agreeably forced to acknowledge that they might have been said by her, and it is impossible not to be grateful to the paraphrast for his boldness." The original correspondence contains some interesting facts, much spurious rhetoric, and many dull pedantic quotations. The work in its integrity was not adapted for popular reading, but as the whole value of the letters depended on their genuineness, they were nearly worthless in their altered form. In 1714 Hughes, the author of the Siege of Damascus, translated the adulterate French concoction, and from the phraseology and substance of Pope's Epistle, it is manifest that he followed the English version of Hughes. Wakefield and Warton have only looked for parallel passages in the Latin, where they will often be sought in vain.

The authenticity of the Latin letters has usually been taken for granted, but I have a strong belief that they are a forgery. The first letter is addressed by Abelard to a friend in misfortune, for the purpose of consoling him with a tale of greater woes. The sequel is

Digitized by Google

not in keeping with the ostensible object. The autobiographical epistle is full of vain-glorious, irrelevant matter, which no one would have recorded whose intention was merely to soothe a sorrow-stricken man. The particulars relative to Abelard's intercourse with Heloisa are worse than gratuitous; they are abominable. The intrigue might be public; he might avow and deplore it; but some reserve was due to decency and his paramour. She was not an anonymous phantom who could not be reached by his revelations. He told her name, and her connections which, according to his narrative, were notorious already, and he was, therefore, forbidden by such honour as even exists among profligates to expose the secret details of her shame. But honour was unknown to him. The veil which rakes who gloated over past misdeeds would have scorned to draw aside was torn away by this pious penitent with treacherous baseness.[1] The disguise is thinly worn. The Abelard of the letter is not the contrite, sorrowing philosopher who is speaking of a gifted woman he had enthusiastically loved, and against whom he had deeply sinned. He is an unimpassioned author who founds a fiction upon a true story, and realising imperfectly the sentiments proper to the situation, relates what he thinks was likely to have happened without perceiving that the confessions would have been infamy in Abelard.

His letter in some unexplained manner got round to Heloisa. She might be expected to be filled with rage and humiliation, and she sends a glowing response to the degrading recital. She outstripped Abelard in shameless frankness. Madame Guizot asserts that "she expresses much more in saying much less, that she recalls, but does not specify,"[2] the truth being that some particulars in her second letter are grosser and more precise than anything which proceeded from the pen of Abelard. The plea that her confessions were made to a husband is no extenuation, since she left his previous revelations unrebuked, and the approval of *his* disclosures was a licence to show about *hers*. What is more, her champions discover ample evidence in her letters that they were intended for publication. "Heloisa," says Madame Guizot, "supplies details with the exactness of a dramatic personage obliged to give an account of certain facts to the

[1] M. Rémusat, who accepts the letters without misgiving, acknowledges that the form of the *Historia Calamitatum* "appears to be an artificial frame to the picture." He assumes that the avowed purpose is a pretext, and that the repentant philosopher commences his narrative with a misstatement. The fiction which M. Rémusat is obliged to admit, does not ward off the strongest objection to the genuineness of the letters, and is the hypothesis least favourable to the reputation of Abelard; for his treachery to Heloisa is immensely aggravated by the admission that his narrative was meant for the public, and not for the eye alone of a friend.

[2] Essai Historique sur Abailard et Héloise, ed. 1861, p. xxvi.

Digitized by Google

audience. There are few letters of the period which have not the stamp of a literary composition destined to a public sufficiently large to render it necessary to put them in possession of the circumstances. If any persons are surprised that Heloisa could design the revelations in her first and especially in her second letter, for any eye but that of Abelard, let them read the incidents she could see recounted without offence in the *Historia Calamitatum*, and they will be convinced of the existence of a state of manners in which elevated and even delicate sentiments in a distinguished and naturally modest woman might be allied to the strangest forms of language."[1] The case is put inaccurately. The "sentiments" are not "delicate;" they are coarser than the language. The reasoning of Madame Guizot is equally defective. An immodest act is declared to be modest because Heloisa had committed a previous act of immodesty. Her toleration of Abelard's grossness is the evidence of her purity in imitating his freedoms. The appeal should have been to independent works of the time, and these are opposed to the theory of Madame Guizot. Language was often plainer than at present, but only creatures of the disgusting type of the Wife of Bath proclaimed the hidden details of their *own* sexual licentiousness. The reputable classes had risen high above the point at which elemental decency and self-respect become extinct. Heloisa must, indeed, have been a woman of an "unbashful forehead," to use the expression of Shakespeare, if she deliberately placed herself before the public as she appears in the letters. It is far more likely that they are the fabrication of an unconcerned romancer, who speaks in the name of others with a latitude which people, not entirely degraded, would never adopt towards themselves. The suspicion is strengthened when the second party to the correspondence, the chief philosopher of his generation, exhibits the same exceptional depravity of taste. The improbability is great that both should have courted a disgraceful notoriety. The correspondence was coined in one mint; the impress it bears is male, and not female; and we may apply to Heloisa the words of Rosalind,—

> I say she never did invent these letters,
> This is a man's invention, and his hand.[2]

No portion of them, if they are genuine, can do honour to her memory. The coarse particulars she divulged to the public would prove that she was debased, and any sentiments which might have been creditable in an artless effusion addressed to Abelard lose their value when they are a studied rhetorical manifesto, got up to produce an impression on the world.

[1] Essai Historique, p. lxiii.
[2] As You Like It, Act iv. sc. 3.

Digitized by Google

According to the *Historia Calamitatum* Abelard was the eldest son of a soldier in Brittany. His father, who had a tincture of learning, imbued him with a passion for study. He renounced the weapons of war for those of logic, resigned his paternal inheritance to his brothers, and traversed the kingdom that he might engage in scholastic tournaments at the towns on his road. He arrived at Paris about the year 1100, when he was twenty-one. There he frequented the lectures of William of Champeaux, the most famous dialectician of the day. Soon the pupil questioned the doctrines of his master, and was often victorious in their public disputations. He established a rival school, and the credit of all other teachers was lost in his renown. William of Champeaux, devoured with envy, struggled for years to drive his antagonist from the field. The invincible Abelard never failed to defeat him, and finally reigned without a competitor.

When his supremacy was recognised in the domain of metaphysical logic, he turned his attention to theology, and proceeding to Laon he sat under Anselm, who was esteemed the foremost divine in the church. The author of the letter affirms that his instruction consisted of fine words without matter, smoke without flame, leaves without fruit. Abelard soon relaxed in his attendance, and expressed his surprise to his fellow-students that any aid should be used beyond the text and the gloss in interpreting the Bible. With a derisive laugh they enquired if he would be bold enough, on these terms, to become the expositor. He accepted the challenge, and they thought to baffle him by allotting him the book of Ezekiel. He replied by inviting them to hear his commentary the following morning. They recommended him to take time, and he answered that his habit was to prevail by force of mind, and not by labour. His audience was small the next day, for it was considered ridiculous that a young man, who had hardly looked into the Bible, should extemporise an explanation of its obscurest prophecies. The few who went were fascinated, and their praises caused his lecture-room to be thronged. The old story was re-enacted. The pupil who had vanquished the most celebrated metaphysician of his generation, now at the first onset eclipsed the greatest theologian in Europe. Anselm, like William of Champeaux, was filled with jealousy, and forbade him to continue his disquisitions at Laon.

He returned to Paris, and taught dialectics and divinity with equal distinction. He had money and glory, he says, in profusion; he imagined that he was the only philosopher on earth; and in the words of the letter which bears his name, he was consumed by the fever of pride and luxury. In this state of worldly prosperity he reached his thirty-sixth year, when he formed his connection with Heloisa, who was barely eighteen. His qualifications for amorous intrigue are related by him with just the same boastful assurance

Digitized by Google

with which he describes his dictatorship in the schools. He declares that his youth, his fame, and his handsome person gave him such a superiority over all other men, that no woman could resist him. Whoever she might be she would have thought herself honoured by his love; and the context shows that the love he meant was illicit. The learning of Heloisa obtained her the preference, and he deliberately formed a plan to seduce her. She resided with her uncle Fulbert, a canon of the cathedral at Paris, who doated on money and his niece. Abelard appealed to the double passion. Professing to desire a release from household cares, he offered to board and lodge with the canon on any terms he chose to ask, and to devote his leisure hours to the instruction of Heloisa. Fulbert was delighted. He confided, to use the language of the letter, the tender lamb to the ravenous wolf, and enjoined the tutor to administer corporal punishment when his pupil neglected her studies. The comment of Abelard, or his representative, is extraordinary. He marvels at the simplicity of the canon in entrusting him with an authority which would enable him, if Heloisa resisted his fondness, to subdue her by blows. He thinks Fulbert childishly credulous for not divining that the grand luminary of philosophy and divinity was a wretch of fiendish depravity—a demon who would adopt the brutal expedient of beating an innocent girl into submission to his wicked designs. In his third letter he acknowledges that he had put the method in practice when the temporary scruples of his victim prevailed.

During the frenzy of his passion Abelard was indifferent to literary glory. His lectures were a burthen to him, and he only cared to compose amatory songs, which he informs his friend are still popular in numerous countries. Heloisa says in her reply that, as the greater part of these poems celebrated their love, her name became famous, and the jealousy of the women was roused. This is one of the many improbabilities of the story. At the exact period that Abelard, by his own acknowledgment, was anxious to conceal his passion from Fulbert, he published it in popular ballads to the world. The inconsistency is too glaring. A second statement is more consonant with human nature. The nerveless lectures, and preoccupied air of Abelard betrayed his infatuation to his disciples. They divined the truth; the intrigue was noised abroad, and the rumour at last got round to Fulbert. Abelard asserts that he and his concubine were overwhelmed with anguish and shame on their detection; Heloisa that her amour was the envy of princesses and queens. The apocryphal writer, after the manner of his tribe, overlooked these discrepancies.

When the first shock of disgrace was past, the lovers disregarded appearances, and carried on their intercourse without disguise. The poor canon was nearly mad between grief and rage, and Abelard

Digitized by Google

to appease him led Heloisa to the altar, on the understanding that their union should be kept a secret; but the relations of the bride broke their promise, and proclaimed that she was married. She protested it was false, and Fulbert, exasperated by her denial, treated her harshly. Her husband removed her to the abbey of Argenteuil, near Paris, that she might be safe from persecution. Her friends conjectured that his object was to get rid of her, and in revenge for his former treachery and present heartlessness, Fulbert bribed some miscreants to mutilate him when he was asleep. Overwhelmed with mortification, he resolved to hide his head in a convent, and selected St. Denis. His jealousy would not suffer him to leave Heloisa free, and before he bound himself by an irrevocable vow he obliged her to take the veil.

The monks in Abelard's new retreat led the dissolute life in which he himself had indulged up to the moment of his disaster. He provoked their hostility by his remonstrances, and to get rid of him they joined in the entreaties of his disciples that he would leave his cell, and resume his lectures. The concourse of hearers was so great that the district where he set up his chair could not afford them food and lodging. The popularity of his teaching is attested by independent evidence, although his extant treatises are bald in style, prolix and cloudy in exposition, abstruse and barren in substance. But manuscripts were scarce; the multitude were chiefly dependent upon oral instruction; literature was almost unknown, and the subtleties of a meagre metaphysical system applied to theology, had a charm for active intellects when theology, logic, and metaphysics had undivided possession of the schools. Controversy lent its powerful aid, animating the dry bones with the fiery life of human passion. The superiority of Abelard in the verbal strife was due to the comparative feebleness of his adversaries, and not to the absolute greatness of his acute, but narrow and unprolific mind. "How is it," said a nobleman to Lely, "that you are so celebrated, when you know, as well as I do, that you are no painter?" "True," replied Lely, "but I am the best you have."

The revival of Abelard's popularity was attended by the old results. Rival schools were deserted, envy, malice, and hatred were inflamed. Applying his metaphysical logic to the doctrines of the Bible he produced a treatise on the Trinity, which he asserts solved every difficulty; and the more transcendent was the mystery, the greater, he says, was the admiration at the acuteness of his solution. But it was by altering the dogma that he brought it down to the level of human reason, and a council at Soissons accused him of heresy. If the letter is to be credited, his antagonists paid him the compliment of refusing to hear his defence, on the plea that his arguments would confound the united world. The assembly voted him guilty, and the troubles which grew out of his condemnation ended in his withdrawing

Digitized by Google

to an uninhabited district on the banks of the river Ardusson, where he constructed an oratory of reeds and mud. Admiring crowds pursued him into his desolate retreat. Sleeping in rude huts, and subsisting on bread and herbs, they abjured the physical luxuries of existence for the mental feast of listening to the arid speculations in vogue. His auditors replaced his cratory by a larger building of wood and stone, which might serve for a lecture-room, and he named it the Paraclete, or the Comforter, because Providence had sent him consolation to the spot whither he had fled in despair. He, or his personator on his behalf, cannot suppress the usual vaunts. His body, he says, was concealed by his seclusion, but he filled the universe by his word and his renown. His enemies were enraged, and groaned inwardly, "Behold the world is gone after him, and our persecution has increased his glory." He admits that the sentiment did not fall from their lips, and it is merely the form in which his vanity embodied their feelings. The celebrated St. Bernard entered the lists against him, and Abelard began to be deserted by his adherents. He completely lost heart, and when the monks of a remote abbey on the coast of Brittany appointed him their head, he was glad to embrace a banishment which removed him from the midst of his increasing foes. New enmities awaited him. As at St. Denis, he soon became odious to his brethren by reproving their laxity. Their vindictive rage knew no bounds. They poisoned his food, but he forbore to taste it. They poisoned the chalice at the altar, but he did not drink of it. They suborned a servant to poison his victuals when he was on a visit to his brother, and again he happened not to eat of the dish, while a monk who partook of it died on the spot. Wherever he went they posted hired assassins on the road, and for some untold reason he always escaped. He procured the expulsion of the most desperate of his bloodthirsty children, and when the remainder were about to stab him he eluded their daggers. The sword, when he wrote, was still hanging over his head, and he passed his days in almost breathless fear. The early novelist who composed the apocryphal correspondence had the art to leave him in this critical situation. But the Abelard of the autobiography is a repulsive hero of romance, since even the penitent is boastful, coarse, and callous.

The abbey of Argenteuil, where Heloisa was prioress, was a dependency of the abbey of St. Denis. The parent monastery reclaimed the building and turned out Heloisa and the nuns. Abelard invited them to meet him at the Paraclete, and he established them in the oratory and its appurtenances, which had remained unoccupied since he settled in Brittany. He took frequent journeys from his abbey to instruct and console them, till finding that his visits gave rise to scandal, he went no more. Heloisa had not seen him or heard from

Digitized by Google

him for a considerable period, when his letter to the unknown friend fell by accident into her hands, and she immediately replied to it. Her character, whether drawn by herself or some fabricator who wrote in her name, comes out clearly in the correspondence. Abelard states that she laboured to dissuade him from marriage when he informed her of his promise to Fulbert after the detection of the intrigue. She said that it would be dishonourable for a philosopher, whom nature had created for the world, to be enslaved to a woman, and submitted to the ignominious yoke of matrimony. She said that his renown would be diminished, that his future career would be checked, that the church would be injured, and that she could have no pride in a union which would degrade both of them by tarnishing his glory. In her answer she confirms his representations; and adds, that if the name of wife was holier, she held that of mistress, concubine, or harlot, to be sweeter, not only for the reasons which Abelard had recapitulated, but because she hoped that the less she made herself the more she would rise in his favour. Dean Milman is in error when he asserts that she "resisted the marriage in an absolute, unrivalled spirit of devotion, so wonderful that we forget to reprove."[1] She did not overlook her personal interests, but believed that the concubine would enjoy more love and consideration than the wife. The theory of her willingness to be sacrificed that her admirer might be elevated has arisen from the inference, contradicted by her language, that she felt the disgrace of her illicit connection. Nothing could be more remote from her thoughts. She was proud of the distinction.

At the date of her letters Heloisa had been leading for years a monastic life, which she embraced against her will at the command of her husband. She had not been refined by misfortune, time, and religion. She continued to bewail her sensual deprivations, and the picture she draws of her subjection to her voluptuous imagination, exceeds anything which could have been expected from the most dissolute libertine. But none of these things repel the partisans of historic romance, and the frail unhappy woman seduced by Abelard is held up as a signal example of feminine excellence. "This noble creature," says M. Cousin, "loved as Saint Theresa, and sometimes wrote as Seneca."[2] "Her contemporaries," says M. Rémusat, "placed her above all women, and I do not know that posterity has belied her contemporaries."[3] "France," says M. Henri Martin, "has always felt the grandeur of Heloisa, and the just instinct of the public has numbered the mistress of Abelard among our national

[1] History of Latin Christianity, vol. iii. p. 363.
[2] Philosophie du Moyen Age, ed. 1856, p. 8.
[3] Vie d'Abelard, Tome 1. p. 262.

Digitized by Google

glories."[1] Her admirers would be puzzled to explain in what her pre-eminence consists. Her devotion to her lover is a quality which she shares with myriads of women, bad as well as good, and her distinctive moral traits are those in which she differs from the majority of her sex by being vastly worse instead of better. A modern Heloisa who pursued the same conduct and avowed the same principles and passions would be branded with infamy.

The Epistle of Pope purports to be Heloisa's reply to Abelard's letter to his friend; but the poet has blended in his composition whatever topics were suited to his purpose, and ascribed sentiments to the wife which he had copied from the husband. There is nothing in the work to indicate that the author had read the Latin text, since he always adheres to the English rendering of the corrupted French version. Bishop Horne held that the original prose was finer than Pope's verse.[2] I cannot assent to this judgment. The poem has the superiority in every particular—in the beauty of the language, in the picturesqueness of the descriptions, in the fervour of the contrasted passions, in the animation of the transitions, in the solemnity of the accompaniments, and above all, in the pathos. The singularity of Horne's estimate may be explained by his imperfect recollection of the productions he criticised. To the allegation of Sir John Hawkins, that matrimony was depreciated and concubinage justified in the poetical epistle, he replies, that the censure "is founded on a false fact, because Abelard was married." The observation is a proof that Horne had forgotten the argument in favour of concubinage which occurs alike in the English verse and the Latin prose. Hallam accuses Pope of having "done great injustice to Eloisa by putting the sentiments of a coarse and abandoned woman into her mouth." But the licentious doctrines which Pope utters in her name are in the original Latin, except that when she asserts that love is inconsistent with marriage, she speaks of her individual case, and does not avowedly lay down a general maxim. Nor can Pope be charged with misrepresentation because the language in which he expresses her sensual cravings is not always borrowed from her pretended confessions. As he has not exaggerated the dominion of her appetite, nor the plainness with which she avows it, he cannot be said to have degraded the copy below the model by an occasional variation in the forms of speech. In fact the increased fervour he has imparted to her religious aspirations renders his portrait the more elevated of the two. The censure to which he lies open is not for deviating from his text but for following it too faithfully.

[1] Hist. de France, tom. iii. 317. [2] Horne's Works, vol. i. p. 248.

[3] Introduction to the Literature of Europe, 5th ed. vol. i. p. 33. Fox, the statesman, was one of those who thought "Eloisa much greater in her letters than Pope had made her."

Digitized by Google

"The Epistle of Heloisa," says Wordsworth, "may be considered as a species of monodrama," and he classes it under the head of dramatic poetry. The painter of an ideal countenance omits the subordinate details which do not contribute to the special expression he desires to convey. By isolating he intensifies it. The holy calm of Raphael's Madonnas would be marred by the introduction of all those minutiæ in the living face which are not concerned in the dominant sentiment. A monodramatic poem which turns upon a single conflict of feeling possesses a kindred advantage. The one absorbing struggle has undivided sway, and there is nothing to distract attention from the pervading emotion. This unity of purpose was present to Pope's mind with absolute distinctness, and he has executed his conception with wonderful force. The combat between Heloisa's earthly inclinations and heavenly convictions, the impetuosity with which she passes from one to the other, the tempest in her soul whichever mood prevails, deep alternately calling to deep, are depicted with concentrated energy, and continuous pathos. Her glowing thoughts are vehement without exaggeration, and the natural outbursts are untainted by spurious artifice.

"Mr. Pope's Eloisa to Abelard is," says Mason, "such a *chef-d'œuvre* that nothing of the kind can be relished after it. Yet it is not the story itself, nor the sympathy it excites in us, as Dr. Johnson would have us think, that constitutes the principal merit in that incomparable poem. It is the happy use he has made of the monastic gloom of the Paraclete, and of what I will call papistical machinery, which gives it its capital charm, so that I am almost inclined to wonder (if I could wonder at any of that writer's criticisms) that he did not take notice of this beauty, as his own superstitious turn certainly must have given him more than a sufficient relish for it."[1] The buildings and scenery, solemn and sombre, undoubtedly heighten the effect. There is an impressive harmony between the over-cast mind of Heloisa, and the objects around her, which deepens the sadness. But the comment of Mason is unfounded. Johnson *did* "notice" the "beauty" derived from the gloom of the convent, while the assertion that this is the "principal merit" of the poem is an extravagant subordination of the human interest, which is the main subject of the Epistle, to the comparatively brief though exquisite description of the local accompaniments. Mason disliked and dreaded Johnson, and avenged himself when Johnson was dead, by feeble expressions of contempt.

The Rape of the Lock and the Epistle to Eloisa stand alone in Pope's works. He produced nothing else which resembled them. They have the merit of being master-pieces in opposite styles. The

[1] Mason's Life of Whitehead, p. 35.

Digitized by Google

first is remarkable for its delicious fancy and sportive satire; the second for its fervid passion and tender melancholy. Two poems of such rare and such different excellence would alone entitle Pope to his fame. Like most great authors he published not a little which is mediocre, but he is to be estimated by the qualities in which he soared above the herd, and not by the lower range of mind he possessed in common with inferior men. The Rape of the Lock is a higher effort of genius than the Epistle. Pope's adaptation of his aery, refulgent sylphs to the ephemeral trivialities of fashionable life, the admirable art with which he fitted his fairy machinery to the follies and common-places of a giddy London day, the poetic grace which he threw around his sarcastic narrative, and which unites with it as naturally as does the rose with its thorny stem, are all unborrowed beauties, and consummate in their kind. The story and sentiments of Heloisa were prepared to his hand, and the power is limited to the strength and sweetness of his language and versification, and to the vigour with which he appropriated and expanded a single leading idea. His imagination was not prolific, and his thoughts seldom sprung from within. Sir William Napier said to Moore, "You are a poet by force of will; Byron by force of nature," which Moore acknowledged to be true. Pope, like Moore, was a poet because from his childhood he had assiduously cultivated poetry. The bulk of his works are either direct translations, or freer renderings under the name of imitations, and putting aside the Rape of the Lock, and parts of his satires, the materials of his original pieces, such as the Essay on Criticism, and Essay on Man, are mostly taken from other authors. The thoughts in the Epistle of Eloisa are not more his own than his critical rules, and ethical philosophy, but the passionate emotions are more poetical, and the execution more finished. Of Pope's better qualities the chief appears to have been a certain tenderness of heart, and this enabled him to enter into the feelings of Heloisa. He employed all the resources of his choicest verse to perfect the picture, and though the details he transferred from the letters deprived him of the credit of invention, the supposed historic truth of the representation increased the effect. The difference between legitimate and worthless imitation could not be more forcibly illustrated than by comparing the tame landscape, and affected love-babble of his Pastorals with the local descriptions and impassioned strains in his Epistle of Eloisa.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE ARGUMENT.

ABELARD and Eloisa flourished in the twelfth century. They were two of the most distinguished persons of their age in learning and beauty, but for nothing more famous than for their unfortunate passion. After a long course of calamities, they retired each to a several convent, and consecrated the remainder of their days to religion. It was many years after this separation, that a letter of Abelard's to a friend, which contained the history of his misfortune, fell into the hands of Eloisa. This, awakening all her tenderness, occasioned those celebrated letters (out of which the following is partly extracted) which give so lively a picture of the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns,
What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?
Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?
Yet, yet I love!—From Abelard it came,[1]
And Eloisa yet must kiss the name.[2]
  Dear fatal name! rest ever unrevealed,
Nor pass these lips in holy silence sealed:
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mixed with God's, his loved idea[3] lies:
O write it not, my hand—the name appears
Already written[4]—wash it out, my tears![5]
In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,
Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.

[1] The letter which Abelard addressed to his friend, and which had fallen into the hands of Eloisa.

[2] Dryden's Don Sebastian:

And when I say Sebastian, dear Sebastian!
I kiss the name I speak.—Steevens.

[3] That is, a lively representation of his person was retained in her mind. So Drayton where he speaks of his departed love:

Clear Ankor, on whose silver-sanded shore
My soul-shrined saint, my fair idea lies.—
Wakefield

[4] Claudian, De Nupt. Honor. et Mar. ver. 9:

Nomenque beatum
Injusse scripsere manus.—Wakefield.

[5] Drayton's Heroical Epistle of Rosamond to Henry:

My hapless name with Henry's name I found—
Then do I strive to wash it out with tears,
But then the same more evident appears.—
Holt White.

Digitized by Google

Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains[1]
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains:
Ye rugged rocks, which holy knees have worn;
Ye grots and caverns, shagged with horrid thorn![2]
Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins keep,[3]
And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep![4]
Though cold like you, unmoved and silent grown,
I have not yet forgot myself to stone.[5]
All is not heaven's while Abelard has part;[6]
Still rebel nature holds out half my heart;
Nor pray'rs nor fasts its stubborn pulse restrain,
Nor tears, for ages taught to flow in vain.
Soon as thy letters trembling I unclose,
That well-known name awakens all my woes.[7]
Oh name for ever sad! for ever dear![8]
Still breathed in sighs, still ushered with a tear.[9]

[1] Some of these circumstances have perhaps a little impropriety when introduced into a place so lately founded as was the Paraclete; but are so well imagined and so highly painted, that they demand excuse.—WARTON.

[2] This is borrowed from Milton's Comus, ver. 428:

By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] A suspected poem of the Duke of Wharton on the Fear of Death:

Where feeble tapers shed a gloomy ray
And statues pity feign;
Where pale-eyed griefs their wasting vigils keep.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] A puerile conceit from the dew which runs down stone and metals in damp weather.—WAKEFIELD.

A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine for October, 1836, quotes a parallel couplet from a poem by the Duke of Wharton:

Where kneeling statues constant vigils keep,
And round the tombs the marble cherubs weep.

[5] He followed Milton in the Penseroso:

Forget thyself to marble.—WAKEFIELD.

Heloisa to Abelard: "O vows! O convent! I have not lost my humanity under your inexorable discipline. You have not made me marble by changing my habit." With the exception of a passage or two quoted by Wakefield, all the extracts in the notes are from Pope's chief text-book, the English work of Hughes, which is very unfaithful to the Latin original.

[6] In every edition till that of Warburton the reading was,

Heav'n claims me all in vain while he has part.

[7] Heloisa to Abelard: "By that melancholy relation to your friend you have awakened all my sorrows."

[8] Dryden's Æneis, v. 64:

A day for ever sad, for ever dear.—WAKEFIELD.

[9] Heloisa to Abelard: "Shall my Abelard be never mentioned without

Digitized by Google

I tremble too, where'er my own I find,
Some dire misfortune follows close behind.
Line after line my gushing eyes o'erflow,
Led through a sad variety of woe :[2]
Now warm in love, now with'ring in my bloom,[3]
Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!
There stern religion quenched th' unwilling flame,
There died the best of passions, love and fame.[4]
Yet write, oh write me all, that I may join
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.[5]
Nor foes nor fortune take this pow'r away ;[6]
And is my Abelard less kind than they?
Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare ;
Love but demands what else were shed in pray'r ;[7]
No happier task these faded eyes pursue ;
To read and weep is all they now can do.[8]

tears? Shall the dear name be never spoken but with sighs?"

[1] Heloisa to Abelard : "I met with my name a hundred times. I never saw it without fear ; some heavy calamity always followed it. I saw yours too equally unhappy."

[2] Pomfret in his Vision :

For sure that flame is kindled from below
Which breeds such sad variety of woe.—
WAKEFIELD.

Steevens quotes from Dryden's State of Innocence the expression "sad variety of hell," and the writer in the Gentleman's Magazine quotes from Yalden's Force of Jealousy the expression "a large variety of woe."

[3] Dryden, Palamon and Arcite :

Now warm in love, now with'ring in the grave.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Fame is not a passion.—WARTON.
Ambition is the passion, and fame is the object of the passion.

[5] Heloisa to Abelard : "Let me have a faithful account of all that concerns you. I would know everything, be it ever so unfortunate. Perhaps by mingling my sighs with yours I may make your sorrows less."

[6] Heloisa to Abelard : "We may write to each other. Let us not lose through negligence the only happiness which is left us, and the only one perhaps which the malice of our enemies can never ravish from us."

[7] Heloisa to Abelard : "Tell me not by way of excuse you will spare our tears ; the tears of women shut up in a melancholy place, and devoted to penitence, are not to be spared."

[8] Denham of Prudence :

To live and die is all we have to do.—
WAKEFIELD.

Prior's Celia to Damon :

And these poor eyes
No longer shall their little lustre keep,
And only be of use to read and weep.

Digitized by Google

Then share thy pain, allow that sad relief;
Ah, more than share it, give me all thy grief.[1]
Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,[2]
Some banished lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,
The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,[3]
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.[4]
Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,[5]
When love approached me under friendship's name;[6]
My fancy formed thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous Mind.[7]
Those smiling eyes, attemp'ring ev'ry ray,
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day;[8]

[1] Heloisa to Abelard: "Be not then unkind, nor deny me that little relief. All sorrows divided are made lighter."

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "Letters were first invented for comforting such solitary wretches as myself."

[3] Heloisa to Abelard: "What cannot letters inspire? They have souls; they can speak; they have in them all that force which expresses the transports of the heart; they have all the fire of our passions; they can raise them as much as if the persons themselves were present; they have all the softness and delicacy of speech, and sometimes a boldness of expression even beyond it."

[4] Otway's translation of Phædra to Hippolytus:

Thus secrets safe to farthest shores may move:
By letters foes converse, and learn to love.
—WAKEFIELD.

[5] This is the most exquisite description of the first commencement of passion that our language, or perhaps any other, affords. — BOWLES.

[6] Prior's Celia to Damon:

In vain I strove to check my growing flame,
Or shelter passion under friendship's name.

[7] The Divinity himself. Dryden, in his 12th Elegy:

So faultless was the frame, as if the whole
Had been an emanation of the soul.—
WAKEFIELD.

[8] Heloisa to Abelard: "That life in your eyes which so admirably expressed the vivacity of your mind; your conversation, which gave everything you spoke such an agreeable and insinuating turn; in short, everything spoke for you."

Digitized by Google

Guiltless I gazed; heav'n listened while you sung;[1]
And truths divine came mended from that tongue.[2]
From lips like those, what precept failed to move?
Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love:
Back through the paths of pleasing sense I ran,[3]
Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.[4]
Dim and remote the joys of saints I see:
Nor envy them that heav'n I lose for thee.

How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I said,
Curse on all laws but those which love has made![5]
Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.[6]
Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dame,
August her deed, and sacred be her fame;[7]

[1] She says herself, "You had, I confess, two qualities in great perfection with which you could instantly captivate the heart of any woman,—a graceful manner of reading and singing." She mentions in another place also the excellence of his singing.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] He was her preceptor in philosophy and divinity.—POPE.

Dryden, Epistle, 14:

The fair themselves go mended from thy hand.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Dryden's Œdipus, end of Act iii.:

And backward trod the paths I sought to shun.

[4] Thy holy precepts and the sanctity of thy character had made me conceive of thee as of a being more venerable than man, and approaching the nature of superior existences. But thy personal allurements soon inspired those tender feelings which gradually conducted me from a veneration of the angel to a less pure and dignified sensation—love for the man.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Dryden, Ovid's Met. x.:

And own no laws but those which love ordains.—WAKEFIELD.

Heloisa to Abelard: "The bonds of matrimony, however honourable, still bear with them a necessary engagement, and I was very unwilling to be necessitated to love always a man who perhaps would not always love me."

[6] Love will not be confined by maisterie:
When maisterie comes, the lord of Love anon
Flutters his wings, and forthwith is he gone. Chaucer.—POPE.

Hudibras, Part iii. Cant. i. 553:

Love that's too generous to abide
To be against its nature tied,
Disdains against its will to stay,
But struggles out and flies away.—
WAKEFIELD.

Dryden's Aurengezebe:

'Tis true of marriage bands I'm weary grown,
Love scorns all ties but those that are his own.—STEEVENS.

The passage cited by Pope from Chaucer is in the Franklin's Tale. Spenser copied and altered the lines, which led Wakefield to imagine that Pope had committed the double error of falsely imputing them to Chaucer, and quoting them incorrectly.

[7] Heloisa to Abelard: "It is not love but the desire of riches and

Digitized by Google

Before true passion all those views remove;
Fame, wealth, and honour! what are you to love?
The jealous god, when we profane his fires,
Those restless passions in revenge inspires,
And bids them make mistaken mortals groan,
Who seek in love for aught but love alone.[1]
Should at my feet the world's great master fall,
Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn them all;
Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove;[2]
No, make me mistress to the man I love;
If there be yet another name more free,[3]
More fond than mistress,[4] make me that to thee.
Oh! happy state! when souls each other draw,
When love is liberty, and nature, law:[5]
All then is full, possessing and possessed,
No craving void left aching in the breast:[6]
Ev'n thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

honour which makes women run into the embraces of an indolent husband: ambition, not affection, forms such marriages. I believe indeed they may be followed with some honours and advantages, but I can never think that this is the way to enjoy the pleasures of an affectionate union."

[1] Heloisa to Abelard: "This restless tormenting passion"—ambition—"punishes them for aiming at other advantages by love than love itself."

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "How often I have made protestations that it was infinitely preferable to me to live with Abelard as his mistress than with any other as empress of the world, and that I was more happy in obeying you than I should have been in lawfully captivating the lord of the universe."

[3] Heloisa to Abelard: "Though I knew that the name of wife was honourable in the world, and holy in religion, yet the name of your mistress had greater charms because it was more free. I despised the name of wife that I might live happy with that of mistress."

[4] Heloisa to Abelard: "We are called your sisters, and if it were possible to think of any expressions which would signify a dearer relation we would use them."

[5] Denham, Cooper's Hill:

> Happy when both to the same centre move,
> When kings give liberty, and subjects love.—CUNNINGHAM.

[6] Heloisa to Abelard: "If there is anything which may properly be called happiness here below, I am persuaded it is in the union of two persons who love each other with perfect liberty, who are united by a secret inclination, and satisfied with each other's merit.

Digitized by Google

This sure is bliss, if bliss on earth there be,
And once the lot of Abelard and me.[1]
Alas, how changed! what sudden horrors rise!
A naked lover bound and bleeding lies![2]
Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,
Her poniard, had opposed the dire command.[3]
Barbarian, stay! that bloody stroke[4] restrain;
The crime was common, common be the pain.[5]
I can no more; by shame, by rage suppressed,[6]
Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest.[7]
Canst thou forget that sad, that solemn day,
When victims at yon[8] altar's foot we lay?
Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,
When, warm in youth, I bade the world farewell?[9]

Their hearts are full, and leave no vacancy for any other passion."

[1] Heloisa to Abelard: "If I could believe you as truly persuaded of my merit as I am of yours, I might say there has been a time when we were such a pair."

[2] Mrs. Rowe in her Elegy:

A dying lover pale and gasping lies.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Heloisa to Abelard: "Where was I? where was your Heloise then? What joy should I have had in defending my lover. I would have guarded you from violence, though at the expense of my life; my cries and shrieks alone would have stopped the hand."

[4] For "stroke" Pope, in all editions till that of 1736, read "hand," the word in the translation. He had used "hand" in the rhyme of the previous couplet, and it was probably to avoid the repetition that he made the alteration.

[5] Careless readers may misapprehend the sense. "Pain" here means punishment, *pœna*.—HOLT WHITE.

Like a verse of Drummond's:

The grief was common, common were the cries.—WAKEFIELD.

Heloisa to Abelard: "You alone expiated the crime common to us both. You only were punished though both of us were guilty."

[6] Heloisa to Abelard: "Oh whither does the excess of passion hurry me! Here love is shocked, and modesty joined with despair deprive me of speech."

[7] A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine quotes Settle's Empress of Morocco:

Muly Hamet.—Speak.
Empress.—Let my tears and blushes speak the rest.

[8] The altar of Paraclete, says Mr. Berrington, did not then exist. They were not professed at the same time or place; one was at Argenteuil, the other at St. Denys.—WARTON.

[9] Abelard to Heloisa: "I accompanied you with terror to the foot of the altar, and while you stretched out your hand to touch the sacred cloth, I heard you pronounce distinctly those fatal words which for ever separated you from all men."

Digitized by Google

As with cold lips I kissed the sacred veil,[1]
The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew pale:[2]
Heav'n scarce believed the conquest it surveyed,
And saints with wonder heard the vows I made.
Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
Not on the cross my eyes were fixed, but you;[3]
Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,
And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.
Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe;[4]
Those still at least are left thee to bestow.[5]
Still on that breast enamoured let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,[6]
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be pressed;
Give all thou canst—and let me dream the rest.
Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,
With other beauties charm my partial eyes,

[1] Her kissing the veil with "cold lips" strongly marks her want of that fervent zeal and devotion which should influence those votaries who renounce the world. The presages, likewise, which attended the rites are finely imagined, — the trembling of the shrines, and the pallid hue of the lamps as if they were conscious of the reluctant sacrifice she was making.— RUFFHEAD.

[2] Prior, in Henry and Emma, has a verse of similar pauses, and similar phraseology:

Thy lips all trembling, and thy cheeks all pale.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Abelard to Heloisa: "I saw your eyes when you spoke your last farewell fixed upon the cross." Heloisa to Abelard: "It was your command only, and not a sincere vocation, as is imagined, that shut me up in these cloisters." The two passages combined suggested the line in the text.

[4] Heloisa to Abelard: "You may see me, hear my sighs, and be a witness of all my sorrows, without incurring any danger, since you can only relieve me with tears and words."

[5] Roscoe remarks that the lines which follow cannot be justified by anything in the letters of Eloisa. Sentiments equally gross are however expressed both in the original Latin and in the adulterated translation which was Pope's authority.

[6] Concannen's Match at Football, Canto iii.:

And drank in poison from her lovely eye.

Creech, at the beginning of his Lucretius:

Where on thy bosom he supinely lies,
And greedily drinks love at both his eyes. - WAKEFIELD.

Smith's Phædra and Hippolytus, Act i.:

Drank gorging in the dear delicious poison. —STEEVENS.

Digitized by Google

Full in my view set all the bright abode,
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.
Ah, think at least thy flock deserves thy care,[1]
Plants of thy hand, and children of thy pray'r;
From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led.[2]
You raised these hallowed walls;[3] the desert smiled,
And Paradise was opened in the wild.[4]
No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
Our shrines irradiate, or emblaze the floors:[5]
No silver saints, by dying misers giv'n,
Here bribed the rage of ill-requited heav'n:
But such plain roofs as piety could raise,[6]
And only vocal with the Maker's praise.[7]
In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound),
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crowned,

[1] "If thou canst forget me, think at least upon thy flock," says Wakefield, in explanation of the train of thought; and he adds a passage from a letter of Eloisa in which she terms the monastery Abelard's "new plantation," and assures him that frequent watering is essential to the tender plants.

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "The innocent sheep, tender as they are, would yet follow you through deserts and mountains."

[3] He founded the monastery.—POPE.

Heloisa to Abelard: "You only are the founder of this house. You by inhabiting here have given fame and sanctity to a place known before only for robbers and murderers."

[4] So Dryden says of Absalom,

And Paradise was opened in his face.

The original of the image in the text is in Isaiah li. 3:

He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of Jehovah.

Whence Milton derived it, Par. Reg. i. 7:

And Eden raised in the waste wilderness.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] The writer in the Gentleman's Magazine quotes Boileau, Le Moine:

Là les salons sont peints, les meubles sont dorés
Des larmes et du sang des pauvres devorés.

[6] Heloisa to Abelard: "These cloisters owe nothing to public charities; our walls were not raised by the usury of publicans, nor their foundations laid on base extortion. The God whom we serve sees nothing but innocent riches, and harmless votaries whom you have placed here."

[7] There were no benefactors whose praises were celebrated in the services, but the building was vocal only with the praise of the Deity.

Digitized by Google

Where awful arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light,[1]
Thy eyes diffused a reconciling ray,[2]
And gleams of glory brightened all the day.[3]
But now no face divine contentment wears,
'Tis all blank sadness, or continual tears.
See how the force of others' pray'rs I try,[4]
O pious fraud of am'rous charity!
But why should I on others' pray'rs depend?[5]
Come thou, my father, brother, husband, friend!
Ah, let thy handmaid, sister, daughter, move,[6]
And all those tender names in one, thy love![7]
The darksome pines that, o'er yon rocks reclined,[8]
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,[9]
The wand'ring streams that shine between the hills,[10]
The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,[11]

[1] Our author imitates Milton:

And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light.—
WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden had said of his Good Parson:

His eyes diffused a venerable grace.—
WAKEFIELD.

[3] Mrs. Rowe on the Creation:

And kindling glories brighten all the skies.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] By pretending that she desires Abelard to visit the Paraclete in obedience to the call of her sister nuns.

[5] Heloisa to Abelard: "But why should I entreat you in the name of your children? Is it possible I should fear obtaining anything of you when I ask in my own name? And must I use any other prayers than my own to prevail upon you?"

[6] From the superscription of Heloisa's letter to Abelard: "To her lord, her father, her husband, her brother; his servant, his child, his wife, his sister, and to express all that is humble, respectful, and loving to her Abelard, Heloisa writes this."

[7] Our poet is indebted to a translation of the Virgilian cento of Ausonius in Dryden's Miscellanies, vi. p. 143:

My love, my life,
And every tender name in one, my wife.
—WAKEFIELD.

[8] Mr. Mills, a clergyman, who visited the Paraclete about the year 1765, says, "Mr. Pope's description is ideal. I saw neither rocks, nor pines, nor was it a kind of ground which ever seemed to encourage such objects."

[9] Addison's translation of book iii. of the Æneis:

The hollow murmurs of the winds that blow.

[10] The little river Ardusson glittered along the valley of the Paraclete.—MILLS.

[11] Philips, in his fourth Pastoral:

Nor dropping waters which from rocks distil,
And welly grots with tinkling echoes fill.—
WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

The dying gales that pant upon the trees,[1]
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;[2]
No more these scenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.[3]
But o'er the twilight groves[4] and dusky caves,
Long-sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:[5]
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,[6]
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.[7]
Yet here for ever, ever must I stay;
Sad proof how well a lover can obey![8]
Death, only death, can break the lasting chain;
And here, ev'n then, shall my cold dust remain;[9]

[1] Milton's Penseroso:

When the gust hath blown his fill
Ending on the rustling leaves.—
WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden, Virg. Geo. iv. 432:

When western winds on curling waters play.

[3] Dryden, Virg. Æn. iii. 575:

Most upbraid
The madness of the visionary maid.—
WAKEFIELD.

[4] Milton's Penseroso:

To arched walks of twilight groves.—
WAKEFIELD.

[5] Waller's version of Æneid iv.:

A death-like quiet, and deep silence fell.

Dryden's Astræa Redux:

A dreadful quiet felt.—WAKEFIELD.

Charles Bainbrigg on the death of Edward King:

Abyssum
Terribilis requies et vasta silentia cingant.
—STEEVENS.

[6] Fenton in his version of Sappho to Phaon:

With him the caves were cool, the grove was green,
But now his absence withers all the scene.
—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Dryden's Theodore and Honoria:

With deeper brown the grove was overspread.—STEEVENS.

Dryden, Æn. vii. 40:

The Trojan from the main beheld a wood,
Which thick with shades and a brown horror stood.—WAKEFIELD.

[8] In allusion to this sacrifice of herself at his will she says in her first letter: "You are of all mankind most abundantly indebted to me; and particularly for that proof of absolute submission to your commands in thus destroying myself at your injunction."
—WAKEFIELD.

[9] Heloisa to Abelard: "Death only can make me leave the place where you have fixed me, and then too my ashes shall rest there, and wait for yours."

Digitized by Google

Here all its frailties, all its flames resign,
And wait till 'tis no sin to mix with thine.[1]
Ah wretch! believed the spouse of God in vain,
Confessed within the slave of love and man.
Assist me, heav'n! but whence arose that pray'r?
Sprung it from piety, or from despair?[2]
Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,
Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.[3]
I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;[4]
I view my crime, but kindle at the view,
Repent old pleasures, and solicit new;[5]
Now turned to heav'n, I weep my past offence,
Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.
Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
'Tis sure the hardest science to forget![6]
How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,
And love th' offender, yet detest th' offence?[7]

[1] Abelard to Heloisa: "I hope you will be contented when you have finished this mortal life to be buried near me. Your cold ashes need then fear nothing."

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "Among those who are wedded to God I serve a man. What a prodigy am I! Enlighten me, O Lord! Does thy grace or my despair draw these words from me?"

[3] Heloisa to Abelard: "I am sensible I am in the temple of chastity covered only with the ashes of that fire which has consumed us."

[4] This couplet, and its wretched rhymes, seem derived from an elegy of Walsh in Dryden's Miscellanies:

I know I ought to hate you for the fault;
But oh! I cannot do the thing I ought.
—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Heloisa to Abelard: "I am here a sinner, but one, who far from weeping for her sins, weeps only for her lover; far from abhorring her crimes endeavours only to add to them, and who pleases herself continually with the remembrance of past actions when it is impossible to renew them." And again: "I, who have experienced so many pleasures in loving you feel, in spite of myself, that I cannot repent of them, nor forbear enjoying them over again as much as is possible by recollecting them in my memory." Abelard, in the translation of the letters, expresses the same sentiment: "Love still preserves its dominion in my fancy, and entertains itself with past pleasures."

[6] Abelard to Heloisa: "To forget in the case of love is the most necessary penitence, and the most difficult."

[7] Dryden's Cymon and Iphigenia:

Then impotent of mind, with altered sense
She hugged th' offender, and forgave th' offence.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

How the dear object from the crime remove,
Or how distinguish penitence from love?[1]
Unequal task! a passion to resign,
For hearts so touched, so pierced, so lost as mine.
Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
How often must it love, how often hate![2]
How often hope, despair, resent, regret,
Conceal, disdain,—do all things but forget.
But let heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fired;
Not touched, but rapt; not wakened, but inspired![3]
Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,
Renounce my love, my life, myself—and you.[4]
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.[5]
How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot:[6]
Eternal sun-shine of the spotless mind!
Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resigned;
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
"Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;"[7]

[1] Abelard to Heloisa: "How can I separate from the person I love the passion I must detest? Will the tears I shed be sufficient to render it odious to me? It is difficult in our sorrow to distinguish penitence from love."

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "A heart which has been so sensibly affected as mine cannot soon be indifferent. We fluctuate long between love and hatred before we can arrive at a happy tranquillity." Abelard to Heloisa: "In such different disquietudes I contradict myself; I hate you; I love you."

[3] Heloisa to Abelard: "God has a peculiar right over the hearts of great men. When he pleases to touch them he ravishes them, and lets them not speak nor breathe but for his glory."

[4] Heloisa to Abelard: "Yes, Abelard, I conjure you teach me the maxims of divine love. Oh! for pity's sake help a wretch to renounce her desires, herself, and, if it be possible, even to renounce you."

[5] Heloisa to Abelard: "When I shall have told you what rival hath ravished my heart from you, you will praise my inconstancy, and will pray this rival to fix it. By this you may judge that it is God alone that takes Heloise from you. What other rival could take me from you? Could you think me guilty of sacrificing the virtuous and learned Abelard to any other but God?"

[6] Horace, Epist. Lib. i. xi. 9:

Oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis.

My friends forgetting, by my friends forgot.—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Taken from Crashaw.—POPE.

Wakefield gives the complete conplet from Crashaw's Description of a religious House:

A hasty portion of prescribed sleep;
Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep.

Digitized by Google

Desires composed, affections ever even;
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
Grace shines around her, with serenest beams,
And whisp'ring angels prompt her golden dreams.
For her, th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes,
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
To sounds of heav'nly harps she dies away,[1]
And melts in visions of eternal day.[2]
Far other dreams my erring soul employ,
Far other raptures, of unholy joy:
When at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,
Fancy restores what vengeance snatched away,
Then conscience sleeps, and leaving nature free,
All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee.
Oh cursed, dear horrors of all-conscious night!
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight![3]
Provoking demons all restraint remove,
And stir within me ev'ry source of love.
I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all thy charms,
And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms.
I wake:—no more I hear, no more I view,
The phantom flies me, as unkind as you.
I call aloud; it hears not what I say:
I stretch my empty arms; it glides away.

[1] The idea of the "wings of seraphs shedding perfumes" is from Milton, Par. Lost, v. 286, where Raphael "shakes heavenly fragrance" from "his plumes," and Dryden in his Tyrannic Love, Act v., mentions the perfumes, the spousals, and the celestial music as accompaniments of the death of St. Catherine:

Æthereal music did her death prepare,
Like joyful sounds of spousals in the air;
A radiant light did her crowned temple gild,
And all the place with fragrant scents was filled;
Of charming notes we heard the last rebounds,
And music dying in remoter sounds.

[2] Adapted from Dryden's Britannia Redivivus:

As star-light is dissolved away
And melts into the brightness of the day.

[3] Dryden's Cinyras and Myrrha, translated from Ovid:

For guilty pleasure gives a double gust.

Digitized by Google

To dream once more I close my willing eyes;
Ye soft illusions, dear deceits, arise;[1]
Alas, no more!—methinks we wand'ring go
Through dreary wastes, and weep each other's woe,[2]
Where round some mould'ring tow'r pale ivy creeps,
And low-browed rocks hang nodding o'er the deeps.
Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies;
Clouds interpose, waves roar, and winds arise.
I shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,
And wake to all the griefs I left behind.
For thee the fates, severely kind,[3] ordain
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
Thy life a long dead calm of fixed repose;
No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows;
Still as the sea, ere winds were taught to blow,
Or moving spirit bade the waters flow;[4]

[1] Heloisa to Abelard: "I will own to you what makes the greatest pleasure I have in my retirement. After having passed the day in thinking of you, full of the dear idea I give myself up at night to sleep. Then it is that Heloise, who dares not without trembling think of you by day, resigns herself entirely to the pleasure of hearing you, and speaking to you. I see you Abelard, and glut my eyes with the sight. Sometimes forgetting the perpetual obstacles to our desires, you press me to make you happy, and I easily yield to your transports. Sleep gives me what your enemies' rage has deprived you of, and our souls, animated with the same passion, are sensible of the same pleasure. But, oh, you delightful illusions, soft errors, how soon do you vanish away! At my awaking I open my eyes, and see no Abelard; I stretch out my arms to take hold of him, but he is not there; I call upon him, he hears me not."

[2] Dryden, Æneis, iv. 677, supplied the idea:

She seems, alone,
To wander in her sleep through ways unknown,
Guideless and dark; or in a desert plain
To seek her subjects, and to seek in vain.

[3] The writer in the Gentleman's Magazine quotes the same expression from Steele's Miscellanies:

No more severely kind affect to put
That lovely anger on.

[4] Heloisa to Abelard: "You are happy, Abelard, and your misfortunes have been the occasion of your finding rest. The punishment of your body has cured the deadly wounds of your soul. I am a thousand times more to be lamented than you; I must resist those fires which love kindles in a young heart."

[5] Dryden's Ovid, Met. i.:

Then, with a breath, he gave the winds to blow,
And bade the congregated waters flow.—
WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Soft as the slumbers of a saint forgiv'n,
And mild as op'ning gleams of promised heav'n.[1]
Come, Abelard! for what hast thou to dread?
The torch of Venus burns not for the dead.[2]
Nature stands checked; religion disapproves;
Ev'n thou art cold—yet Eloisa loves.
Ah hopeless, lasting flames! like those that burn
To light the dead, and warm th' unfruitful urn.[3]
What scenes appear where'er I turn my view?
The dear ideas, where I fly, pursue,
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise,[4]
Stain all my soul, and wanton in my eyes.
I waste the matin lamp in sighs for thee,
Thy image steals between my God and me,[5]
Thy voice I seem in ev'ry hymn to hear,
With ev'ry bead I drop too soft a tear.[6]
When from the censer clouds of fragrance roll,
And swelling organs lift the rising soul,
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight,
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight;[7]

[1] Sir William Davenant's Address to the Queen:

Smooth as the face of waters first appeared,
Ere tides began to strive, or winds were heard;
Kind as the willing saints, and calmer far
Than in their sleeps forgiven hermits are.
—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Heloisa to Abelard: "When we love pleasures we love the living and not the dead." In all editions till that of 1736 this couplet followed:

Cut from the root my perished joys I see,
And love's warm tide for ever stopped in thee.

[3] Hudibras, Part ii. Canto i. 309:

Love in your heart as idly burns
As fire in antique Roman urns
To warm the dead, and vainly light
Those only that see nothing by't.—
WAKEFIELD.

[4] Heloisa to Abelard: "Whatever endeavours I use, on whatever side I turn me, the sweet idea still pursues me, and every object brings to my mind what I ought to forget. Even into holy places before the altar, I carry with me the memory of our guilty loves. They are my whole business."

[5] Abelard to Heloisa: "In spite of severe fasts your image appears to me, and confounds all my resolutions."

[6] Sedley's verses on Don Alonzo:

The gentle nymph,
Drops tears with every bead.—WAKEFIELD.

The force of the line is, however, in the phrase "too soft" which Pope has added. "With every bead I drop a tear of tender love instead of a tear of bitter repentance."

[7] Smith's Phædra and Hippolytus, Act i.:

All the idle pomp,
Priests, altars, victims swam before my sight.—STEEVENS.

Digitized by Google

In seas of flame my plunging soul is drowned,
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.[1]
While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,
Kind, virtuous drops just gath'ring in my eye,
While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,
And dawning grace is op'ning on my soul:
Come, if thou dar'st, all charming as thou art!
Oppose thyself to heav'n; dispute my heart:
Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes
Blot out each bright idea of the skies;
Take back that grace, those sorrows, and those tears;
Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs;
Snatch me, just mounting, from the bless'd abode;
Assist the fiends, and tear me from my God![2]
No, fly me, fly me, far as pole from pole;[3]
Rise alps between us! and whole oceans roll![4]
Ah, come not, write not, think not once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.
Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign;[5]
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.
Fair eyes, and tempting looks, (which yet I view!)
Long loved, adored ideas, all adieu!

[1] How finely does this glowing imagery introduce the transition,

While prostrate here, &c.—Bowles.

[2] The whole of this paragraph is from Abelard's letter to Heloisa: "I am a miserable sinner prostrate before my judge, and with my face pressed to the earth I mix my tears and sighs in the dust when the beams of grace and reason enlighten me. Come, see me in this posture and solicit me to love you! Come, if you think fit, and in your holy habit thrust yourself between God and me, and be a wall of separation! Come and force from me those sighs, thoughts, and vows which I owe to him only! Assist the evil spirits and be the instrument of their malice! But rather withdraw yourself and contribute to my salvation."

[3] Abelard to Heloisa: "Let me remove far from you, and obey the apostle who hath said, fly."

[4] Wakefield quotes the lines of Hopkins to a lady, where, speaking of her beauties, he entreats that she will

Drive 'em somewhere, as far as pole from pole;
Let winds between us rage, and waters roll.

[5] Abelard to Heloisa: "It will always be the highest love to show none: I here release you of all your oaths and engagements to me."

Digitized by Google

Oh grace serene! oh virtue heav'nly fair!
Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care![2]
Fresh-blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky!
And faith, our early immortality![3]
Enter, each mild, each amicable guest:
Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest.
See in her cell sad Eloisa spread,
Propped on some tomb, a neighbour of the dead.[4]
In each low wind methinks a spirit calls,
And more than echoes talk along the walls.[5]
Here, as I watched the dying lamps around,
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.
"Come, sister, come! (it said, or seemed to say)[6]
"Thy place is here, sad sister, come away;[7]

[1] The combination heavenly-fair" is also found in Sandys, Congreve, and Tickell.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] "Low-thoughted care" is from Milton's Comus.—WARTON.

[3] This resembles a passage in Crashaw:

Fair hope! our earlier heaven.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] "It should," says Mr. Mills, "be *near* her cell. The doors of all cells open into the common cloister. In that cloister are often tombs." Steevens adds the frivolous objection that the "Paraclete had been too recently founded for monuments of the dead to be expected there." Heloisa had been five years abbess when she wrote her first letter to Abelard, and it is certainly not an extravagant supposition that a death might have occurred among the nuns in that space of time.

[5] Dryden's Palamon and Arcite:

And issuing sighs that smoked along the wall.—WAKEFIELD.

Addison's translation of a passage from Claudian:

Oft in the winds is heard a plaintive sound
Of melancholy ghosts that hover round.

[6] Fenton's translation of Sappho to Phaon:

Here, while by sorrow lulled to sleep I lay,
Thus said the guardian nymph, or seemed to say.—WAKEFIELD

Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, Act iv. Sc. 4:

Hark! you are called: some say, the Genius so
Cries, "Come!" to him that instantly must die.

[7] Pope owes much throughout this poem to the character of Dido as drawn by Virgil, and this passage seems directly formed upon one in Dryden, Æn. iv. 667:

Oft when she visited this lonely dome
Strange voices issued from her husband's tomb:
She thought she heard him summon her away,
Invite her to his grave, and chide her stay.

The imitation of the passage in Ovid, Epist. vii. 101, similar to this from Virgil, is still more palpable:

Hinc ego me sensi noto quater ore citari:
Ipse sono tenui dixit, "Elissa, veni!"
Nulla mora est; venio: venio, tibi debita conjux.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

" Once like thyself, I trembled, wept, and prayed,
" Love's victim then, though now a sainted maid :[1]
" But all is calm in this eternal sleep ;[2]
" Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep,
" Ev'n superstition loses every fear:
" For God, not man, absolves our frailties here."
I come, I come![3] prepare your roseate bow'rs,
Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs;
Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
Where flames refined in breasts seraphic glow:
Thou, Abelard! the last sad office pay,[4]
And smooth my passage to the realms of day:[5]
See my lips tremble, and my eye-balls roll,
Suck my last breath, and catch my flying soul![6]
Ah no—in sacred vestments may'st thou stand,
The hallowed taper trembling in thy hand,
Present the cross before my lifted eye,
Teach me at once, and learn of me to die.[7]
Ah then, thy once-loved Eloisa see!
It will be then no crime to gaze on me.

[1] It is well contrived that this invisible speaker should be a person that had been under the very same kind of misfortunes with Eloisa.—WARTON.

[2] Dryden's version of the latter part of the third book of Lucretius :

But all is there serene in that eternal sleep.
—WAKEFIELD.

[3] In the first edition :

I come ye ghosts.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Ogilby, Virg. Æn. xi. :

And to the dead our last sad duties pay.

Dryden, Æn. xi. 322 :

Perform the last sad office to the slain.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Dryden's Aurengezebe at the commencement of Act iv. :

I thought before you drew your latest breath,
To sooth your passage, and to soften death.

[6] Oldham's translation of Bion on the death of Adonis :

Kiss, while I watch thy swimming eye-balls roll,
Watch thy last gasp, and catch thy springing soul.

Dryden's Virg. Æn. iv. 984 :

While I in death
Lay close my lips to hers, and catch the flying breath.

And in his Cleomenes, the end of Act iv. :

—— sucking in each other's latest breath.
—WAKEFIELD.

[7] Rowe's ode to Delia :

When e'er it comes, may'st thou be by,
Support my sinking frame, and teach me how to die.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

See from my cheek the transient roses fly![1]
See the last sparkle languish in my eye!
'Till ev'ry motion, pulse, and breath be o'er;
And ev'n my Abelard be loved no more.
Oh death all-eloquent! you only prove
What dust we doat on, when 'tis man we love.[2]
Then too, when fate shall thy fair fame destroy,
(That cause of all my guilt, and all my joy)[3]
In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drowned,
Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round,
From op'ning skies may streaming glories shine,
And saints embrace thee with a love like mine.
May one kind grave unite each hapless name,[4]
And graft my love immortal on thy fame!
Then, ages hence, when all my woes are o'er,
When this rebellious heart shall beat no more;
If ever chance two wand'ring lovers brings
To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,
O'er the pale marble shall they join their heads,
And drink the falling tears each other sheds;[5]
Then sadly say, with mutual pity moved,
"Oh may we never love as these have loved!"

[1] Dryden Æn., xi. 1194:

And from her cheeks the rosy colour flies.

[2] Abelard to Heloisa: "You shall see me to strengthen your piety by the horror of this carcase, and my death, then more eloquent than I can be, will tell you what you love when you love a man."

[3] Spenser, Faerie Queen, i. 4, 45:

Cause of my new grief, cause of new joy.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Abelard and Eloisa were interred in the same grave, or in monuments adjoining, in the monastery of the Paraclete. He died in the year 1142, she in 1163 [4].—POPE.

Abelard and Heloisa are said to have been both sixty-three when they died. They were buried in the same crypt, but it was not till 1630, or near five hundred years after the death of Heloisa, that their remains were consigned to the same grave. Then their bones are reported to have been put into a double coffin, divided by a partition of lead. They subsequently underwent various disinterments and removals, till in 1817 the alleged relics were transferred to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, at Paris, and have not since been disturbed.

[5] Dryden, in his translation of Canace to Macareus:

I restrained my cries
And drunk the tears that trickled from my eyes.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

From the full choir[1] when loud hosannas rise,
And swell the pomp of dreadful sacrifice,[2]
Amid that scene if some relenting eye
Glance on the stone where our cold relics lie,
Devotion's self shall steal a thought from heav'n,
One human tear shall drop, and be forgiv'n.
And sure if fate some future bard shall join
In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
Condemned whole years in absence to deplore,
And image charms he must behold no more;
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost;[3]
He best can paint them who shall feel them most.[4]

[1] Milton, Il Penseroso:

> There let the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced choir below.

[2] "Dreadful sacrifice" is the ritual term. So in the History of Loretto, 1608, ch. 20, p. 278, "The priest, as the use is, assisted the cardinal in the time of the dreadful sacrifice."—STEEVENS.

[3] Warton says that the eight concluding lines of the Epistle "are rather flat and languid." It is indeed an absurd supposition that a woman who had been speaking the fervid language of christianity should imagine that her state in the world beyond the grave would be that of a "pensive ghost," and that her consolation would consist in having her woes "well-sung" on earth. And it is in the tremendous conflict between piety and passion, while divine and human love are contending fiercely for the mastery, that she finds relief in this unsubstantial idea that some future lover would make her the subject of a poem.

[4] The last line is imitated from Addison's Campaign.

> Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—
> Raised of themselves their genuine charms they boast,
> And those who paint them truest, praise them most.

This Pope had in his thoughts; but not knowing how to use what was not his own, he spoiled the thought when he had borrowed it. Martial exploits may be painted; perhaps woes may be painted; but they are surely not painted by being well sung: it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colours.—JOHNSON.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

AN

ESSAY ON MAN,

IN FOUR EPISTLES

TO

HENRY ST. JOHN, LORD BOLINGBROKE.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1732.

Digitized by Google

AN ESSAY ON MAN.—ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND. Part I.

London: Printed for J. WILFORD, at the Three Flower-de-luces, behind the Chapter-house, St. Paul's. Price one shilling. Folio.

This is the first edition of Epistle I. of the Essay on Man, which was published anonymously, and without any date on the title-page, Feb. 1733. It was also printed in quarto and octavo. The octavo has not the prefatory address "To the Reader." The right to print each epistle of the Essay on Man for one year was bought by Gilliver for 50*l.* an Epistle.

AN ESSAY ON MAN.—IN EPISTLES TO A FRIEND. Epistle I.

Corrected by the Author. London, etc. Folio.

The rest of the title-page is the same as in the first edition. This second edition has a table of Contents to the first three Epistles, which were originally published without the table. The fourth Epistle had the table prefixed from the outset. With the exception of the first Epistle, I am not aware that there was a second edition of any part of the Essay on Man till the whole was incorporated in the works of the poet. An octavo edition, published by WILFORD in 1736, is called the seventh; but he may have counted in the three sizes of the first edition, together with the editions which had appeared in Pope's works.

AN ESSAY ON MAN.—IN EPISTLES TO A FRIEND. Epistle II.

London: Printed for J. WILFORD, at the Three Flower-de-luces, behind the Chapter-house, St. Paul's. Price one shilling. Folio.

The second Epistle appeared about April, 1733.

The title of the third and fourth Epistle is the same as that of the second. At the end of the third Epistle is this notice: "N.B. The rest of the work will be published the next winter," and the promise was kept by the publication of the fourth Epistle about the middle of January, 1734. The last three Epistles were printed like their precursor, in quarto and octavo, as well as folio. The octavo edition of all four Epistles differs from the rest in having the year on the title-page,—the first three, 1733, the fourth Epistle, 1734.

AN ESSAY ON MAN: BEING THE FIRST BOOK OF ETHIC EPISTLES.

To H. ST. JOHN L. BOLINGBROKE. With the Commentary and Notes of W. WARBURTON, A.M.

London: Printed by W. BOWYER for M. COOPER, at the Globe, in Paternoster-Row, 1743. 4to.

This is the first edition with Warburton's Commentary, and the last which appeared during the life-time of Pope. The Essay on Criticism is in the same volume, which was kept back for some months after it was printed, and was not published till 1744.

Digitized by Google

Warburton and Hurd have introduced a new kind of criticism, in which they discover views and purposes the authors never had, and they themselves never believed they had, but consider them as the refinements of their own delicate conceptions, only taking hints from these authors, to show how much higher they themselves would have carried the same ideas. Warburton's discovering "the regularity" of Pope's Essay on Criticism, and "the whole scheme" of his Essay on Man, I happen to know to be mere absurd refinement in creating conformities, and that from Pope himself, though he thought fit to adopt them afterwards. By this method of overlooking the plain and simple meaning which presents itself at first sight (as that of good authors always does, only that there is no credit to be gained in discovering what any one else could discover) it might clearly be shown that Pope's Art of Criticism is, indeed, an Essay on Man, and his Essay on Man was really designed by the deep author for an Art of Criticism. I know that these would not be more false than the assertion and sophistry in proving "the regularity" of his Art of Criticism, since he, when often speaking of it, before he so much as knew Warburton, spoke of it always, as an "irregular collection of thoughts thrown together as they offered themselves, as Horace's Art of Poetry was, and written in imitation of that irregularity," which he even admired, and said was beautiful. As for his Essay on Man, as I was witness to the whole conduct of it in writing, and actually have his original MSS. for it from the first scratches of the four books, to the several finished copies, all which, with the MS. of his Essay on Criticism, and several of his other works, he gave me himself for the pains I took in collating the whole with the printed editions, at his request, on my having proposed to him the "making an edition of his works in the manner of Boileau's,"—as to this noblest of his works, I know that he never dreamed of the scheme he afterwards adopted, perhaps for good reasons, for he had taken terror about the clergy, and Warburton himself, at the general alarm of its fatalism, and deistical tendency, of which however we talked with him (my father and I) frequently at Twickenham, without his appearing to understand it otherwise, or ever thinking to alter those passages, which we suggested as what might seem the most exceptionable.[1]—Richardson.

[1] Roscoe supposes Richardson to have asserted that there was an "entire discrepancy between the Essay on Man as published, and the original manuscripts," and to have implied that the change was from "infidelity" to its opposite. This is not the statement of Richardson. He says, on the contrary, that when the "exceptionable passages" were pointed out Pope "did not think of altering them," and "never dreamed of adopting" a more orthodox "scheme" for his

Digitized by Google

The Essay on Man was at first given, as Mr. Pope told me, to Dr. Young, to Dr. Desaguliers,[1] to Lord Bolingbroke, to Lord Paget,[2] and in short to everybody but to him who was capable of writing it. While several of his acquaintances read the Essay on Man as the work of an unknown author, they fairly owned they did not understand it,[3] but when the reputation of the poem became secured by the knowledge of the writer, it soon grew so clear and intelligible, that, on the appearance of the Comment on it, they told him they wondered the editor should think a large and minute interpretation necessary.—WARBURTON.

[In 1733] Pope published the first part of what he persuaded

Essay till after "its fatalism and deistical tendency" had excited that "general alarm" which could not precede the publication of the poem, and which only, in fact, commenced some three years later. Richardson is enforcing his charge against Warburton of inventing forced meanings, and the instance would contradict the accusation if Pope had altered his language from deism to orthodoxy before he printed the work. The commentary would then have expressed the natural sense of the text. The change of which Richardson speaks was not in the Essay itself, but in the interpretation Pope put upon it. While he was composing the poem he accepted the deistical construction of the Richardsons; and when he was terrified at the "general alarm" he endorsed the christian construction of Warburton.

[1] Dr. Desaguliers, the son of a French refugee, was born at Rochelle in 1683, and died, Feb. 29, 1744, at the Bedford Coffee-house, Covent Garden. He was a clergyman of the church of England, a great lover of science, and a friend of Newton. He delivered lectures for many years on Experimental Philosophy, and published an excellent work on the subject in 2 vols. 4to. He does not appear to have shown any turn for poetry, and those who ascribed to him the Essay on Man may have had no better ground for their opinion than that the poem treated of one kind of philosophy, and Desaguliers was learned in another.

[2] Thomas Catesby, Lord Paget, son of the Earl of Uxbridge, died before his father in Jan. 1742. He published in 1734, a poem called An Essay on Human Life; and in 1737 An Epistle to Mr. Pope, in Anti-heroics. "The former," says Horace Walpole, "is written in imitation of Pope's ethic epistles, and has good lines, but not much poetry."

[3] In the Life of Pope by the pretended Squire Ayre, it is said that "a certain gentleman," meaning Mallet, was at Pope's house shortly after the first Epistle was published, and in answer to the question "What new pieces were brought to light?" replied, "That there was a thing come out called an Essay on Man, and it was a most abominable piece of stuff; shocking poetry, insufferable philosophy, no coherence, no connection at all." Pope confessed he was the author, which, says Ayre, "was like a clap of thunder to the mistaken bard; with a blush and a bow he took his leave of Pope, and never ventured to show his unlucky face there again." The final statement is contradicted by the letters of Pope and Mallet, which prove that they carried on a cordial intercourse to the last. The rest of the story is improbable, for it is not likely that Pope, who was bent at this early period upon keeping the authorship a secret, would have unmasked himself in a manner to preclude confidence, and provoke Mallet to divulge the truth to the world. Ayre's authority is good for nothing, and Ruffhead only copied Ayre, but his repetition of the anecdote gave it currency, and it has ever since passed unquestioned from writer to writer.

Digitized by Google

himself to think a system of ethics, under the title of an Essay on Man, which, if his letter to Swift of September 14, 1725, be rightly explained by the commentator,[1] had been eight years under his consideration, and of which he seems to have desired the success with great solicitude. He had now many open and doubtless many secret enemies. The dunces were yet smarting with the war; and the superiority which he publicly arrogated disposed the world to wish his humiliation. All this he knew, and against all this he provided. His own name, and that of his friend to whom the work is inscribed,[2] were in the first editions carefully suppressed, and the poem, being of a new kind, was ascribed to one or another, as favour determined or conjecture wandered: it was given, says Warburton, to every man except him only who could write it. Those who like only when they like the author, and who are under the dominion of a name, condemned it, and those admired it who are willing to scatter praise at random, which while it is unappropriated excites no envy. Those friends of Pope that were trusted with the secret went about lavishing honours on the new-born poet, and hinting that Pope was never so much in danger from any former rival. To those authors whom he had personally offended, and to those whose opinion the world considered as decisive, and whom he suspected of envy or malevolence, he sent his Essay as a present before publication, that they might defeat their own enmity by praises which they could not afterwards decently retract. With these precautions, in 1732[3] was published the first part of the Essay on Man. There had been for some time a report that Pope was busy upon a system of morality; but this design was not discovered in the new poem, which had a form and a title with which its readers were unacquainted. Its reception was not uniform; some thought it a very imperfect piece, though not without good lines. While the author was unknown, some, as will always happen, favoured him as an adventurer, and some censured him as an intruder, but all thought him above neglect: the sale increased, and editions were multiplied. The second and third Epistles were published, and Pope was, I believe, more and more suspected of writing them. At last, in 1734, he avowed the fourth, and claimed the honour of a moral poet.

In the conclusion it is sufficiently acknowledged that the doctrine of the Essay on Man was received from Bolingbroke, who is said to have ridiculed Pope, among those who enjoyed his confidence, as

[1] Warburton. "Your Travels I hear much of," says Pope in the letter to Swift; "my own I promise you shall never more be in a strange land, but a diligent, I hope, useful investigation of my own territories. I mean no more translations, but something domestic, fit for my own country, and my own time." The allusion is obscure, and it may be doubted whether Pope referred to his ethical scheme, which he did not commence till four years later.

[2] Bolingbroke.

Digitized by Google

having adopted and advanced principles of which he did not perceive the consequence, and as blindly propagating opinions contrary to his own. That those communications had been consolidated into a scheme regularly drawn, and delivered to Pope, from whom it returned only transformed from prose to verse, has been reported, but hardly can be true.[1] The Essay plainly appears the fabric of a poet: what Bolingbroke supplied could be only the first principles; the order, illustration, and embellishments must all be Pope's. These principles it is not my business to clear from obscurity, dogmatism, or falsehood; but they were not immediately examined: philosophy and poetry have not often the same readers, and the Essay abounded in splendid amplifications and sparkling sentences, which were read and admired with no great attention to their ultimate purpose; its flowers caught the eye, which did not see what the gay foliage concealed, and for a time flourished in the sunshine of universal approbation. So little was any evil tendency discovered, that, as innocence is unsuspicious, many read it for a manual of piety.

Its reputation soon invited a translator. It was first turned into French prose, and afterwards by Resnel into verse. Both translations fell into the hands of Crousaz, who first, when he had the version in prose, wrote a general censure, and afterwards reprinted Resnel's version with particular remarks upon every paragraph.[2] Crousaz was a professor of Switzerland, eminent for his treatise of Logic, and his Examen de Pyrrhonisme, and, however little known or regarded here, was no mean antagonist. His mind was one of those in which philosophy and piety are happily united. He was accustomed to argument and disquisition, and was perhaps grown too desirous of detecting faults; but his intentions were always right, his opinions were solid, and his religion pure. His incessant vigilance for the promotion of piety disposed him to look with distrust upon all metaphysical systems of theology, and all schemes of virtue

[1] The authority was Lord Bathurst. Dr. Hugh Blair dined with him in 1763, and says in a letter to Boswell, that "the conversation turning on Mr. Pope, Lord Bathurst told us that the Essay on Man was originally composed by Lord Bolingbroke in prose, and that Mr. Pope did no more than put it into verse: that he had read Lord Bolingbroke's manuscript in his own handwriting, and remembered well that he was at a loss whether most to admire the elegance of Lord Bolingbroke's prose, or the beauty of Mr. Pope's verse." Boswell read the account to Johnson, who replied, "Depend upon it, sir, this is too strongly stated. Pope may have had from Bolingbroke the philosophic stamina of his Essay, and admitting this to be true, Lord Bathurst did not intentionally falsify. But the thing is not true in the latitude that Blair seems to imagine; we are sure that the poetical imagery, which makes a great part of the poem, was Pope's own."

[2] The first treatise of Crousaz was translated by Miss Carter, and published in 1738, under the title of An Examination of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man. The second treatise was translated by Johnson himself, and published in 1742, with the title, A Commentary on Mr. Pope's Principles of Morality.

Digitized by Google

and happiness purely rational; and therefore it was not long before he was persuaded that the positions of Pope, as they terminated for the most part in natural religion, were intended to draw mankind away from revelation, and to represent the whole course of things as a necessary concatenation of indissoluble fatality; and it is undeniable that, in many passages, a religious eye may easily discover expressions not very favourable to morals or liberty.

About this time Warburton began to make his appearance in the first ranks of learning. He was a man of vigorous faculties, a mind fervid and vehement, supplied, by incessant and unlimited inquiry, with wonderful extent and variety of knowledge, which yet had not oppressed his imagination nor clouded his perspicacity. To every work he brought a memory full fraught, together with a fancy fertile of original combinations, and at once exerted the powers of the scholar, the reasoner, and the wit. But his knowledge was too multifarious to be always exact, and his pursuits too eager to be always cautious. His abilities gave him a haughty confidence, which he disdained to conceal or mollify; and his impatience of opposition disposed him to treat his adversaries with such contemptuous superiority as made his readers commonly his enemies, and excited against the advocate the wishes of some who favoured the cause. He seems to have adopted the Roman emperor's determination, "oderint dum metuant;" he used no allurements of gentle language, but wished to compel rather than persuade. His style is copious without selection, and forcible without neatness; he took the words that presented themselves; his diction is coarse and impure, and his sentences are unmeasured. He had in the early part of his life pleased himself with the notice of inferior wits, and corresponded with the enemies of Pope. A letter was produced when he had perhaps himself forgotten it, in which he tells Concanen, "Dryden, I observe, borrows for want of leisure, and Pope for want of genius; Milton out of pride, and Addison out of modesty." And when Theobald published Shakespeare, in opposition to Pope, the best notes were supplied by Warburton.[1] But the time was now come when Warburton was to change his opinion, and Pope was to find a defender in him who had contributed so much to the exaltation of his rival. The arrogance of Warburton excited against him every artifice of offence, and therefore it may be supposed that his union with Pope was censured as hypocritical inconstancy; but surely to think differently at different times of poetical merit may be easily allowed. Such opinions are often admitted and dismissed without nice examination. Who is there that has not found reason for changing his opinion about questions of greater importance? Warburton, whatever was his motive,

[1] Theobald's Shakespeare was published in 1733, the same year with the first three epistles of the Essay on Man.

Digitized by Google

undertook, without solicitation, to rescue Pope from the talons of Crousaz, by freeing him from the imputation of favouring fatality or rejecting revelation; and from month to month continued a vindication of the Essay on Man in the literary journal of that time, called The Republic of Letters.[1] Pope, who probably began to doubt the tendency of his own work, was glad that the positions, of which he perceived himself not to know the full meaning, could by any mode of interpretation be made to mean well. How much he was pleased with his gratuitous defender the following letter evidently shows:—

"April 11, 1739.

"Sir,—I have just received from Mr. R[obinson][2] two more of your letters. It is in the greatest hurry imaginable that I write this; but I cannot help thanking you in particular for your third letter, which is so extremely clear, short, and full, that I think Mr. Crousaz ought never to have another answer, and deserved not so good an one. I can only say you do him too much honour, and me too much right, so odd as the expression seems; for you have made my system as clear as I ought to have done, and could not. It is indeed the same system as mine, but illustrated with a ray of your own, as they say our natural body is the same still when it is glorified. I am sure I like it better than I did before, and so will every man else. I know I meant just what you explain; but I did not explain my own meaning so well as you. You understand me as well as I do myself; but you express me better than I could express myself. Pray accept the sincerest acknowledgments. I cannot but wish these letters were put together in one book,[3] and intend, with your leave, to procure a translation of part, at least, or of all of them into French; but I shall not proceed a step without your consent and opinion, etc."

By this fond and eager acceptance of an exculpatory comment, Pope testified that whatever might be the seeming or real import of the principles which he had received from Bolingbroke, he had not intentionally attacked religion; and Bolingbroke, if he meant to make him, without his own consent, an instrument of mischief, found him now engaged, with his eyes open, on the side of truth. It is known that Bolingbroke concealed from Pope his real opinions. He once discovered them to Mr. Hooke, who related them again to Pope, and was told by him that he must have mistaken the meaning of what he heard; and Bolingbroke, when Pope's uneasiness incited him to desire an explanation, declared that Hooke had misunderstood him. Bolingbroke hated Warburton, who had drawn his pupil from him; and a little before Pope's death they had a dispute

[1] Warburton's first letter in vindication of Pope appeared in The Works of the Learned, December 1738. The journal called The Present State of the Republic of Letters, had come to an end in 1736.

[2] Jacob Robinson, a bookseller in Fleet-street, was the publisher of The Works of the Learned, to which Warburton sent his five letters in reply to Crousaz.

[3] This was done in 1740, when the five letters were expanded into six. A seventh letter was added in a subsequent edition, and the whole was re-arranged in four letters in the edition of 1742.

Digitized by Google

from which they parted with mutual aversion.[1] From this time Pope lived in the closest intimacy with his commentator, and amply rewarded his kindness and his zeal; for he introduced him to Mr. Murray, by whose interest he became preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and to Mr. Allen, who gave him his niece and his estate, and by consequence a bishopric. When he died, he left him the property of his works, a legacy which may be reasonably estimated at four thousand pounds.

Pope's fondness for the Essay on Man appeared by his desire of its propagation. Dobson, who had gained reputation by his version of Prior's Solomon, was employed by him to translate it into Latin verse, and was for that purpose some time at Twickenham; but he left his work, whatever was the reason, unfinished,[2] and, by Benson's invitation, undertook the longer task of Paradise Lost. Pope then desired his friend[3] to find a scholar who should turn his Essay into Latin prose, but no such performance has ever appeared.

The Essay on Man was a work of great labour and long consideration, but certainly not the happiest of Pope's perfomances. The subject is perhaps not very proper for poetry, and the poet was not sufficiently master of his subject; metaphysical morality was to him a new study, he was proud of his acquisitions, and, supposing himself master of great secrets, was in haste to teach what he had not learned. Thus he tells us, in the first epistle, that from the nature of the Supreme Being may be deduced an order of beings such as mankind, because infinite excellence can do only what is best. He finds out that these beings must be "somewhere," and that "all the question is whether man be in a wrong place." Surely if, according to the poet's Leibnitzian reasoning, we may infer that man ought to be, only because he is, we may allow that his place is the right place because he has it. Supreme Wisdom is not less infallible in disposing than in creating. But what is meant by "somewhere," and "place," and "wrong place," it had been vain to ask Pope, who probably had never asked himself.

Having exalted himself into the chair of wisdom, he tells us much that every man knows, and much that he does not know himself:

[1] Ruffhead's Life of Pope, p. 219.

[2] Warton states that Dobson relinquished the undertaking from the impossibility of preserving in Latin verse the conciseness of the English. He appears to have accomplished half his task; for when Christopher Smart subsequently volunteered his services, Pope said in his reply, Nov. 18, 1740, "The two first epistles are already well done." A specimen from Dobson's translation of each of these epistles was among the papers of Spence, and is printed in the appendix to Mr. Singer's edition of the Anecdotes. A version of the Essay in Latin hexameters appeared at Wirtemberg. This, Pope tells Smart, was "very faithful but inelegant," and he adds that his reason for desiring a more adequate rendering was that either the sense or the poetry was lost in all the foreign translations.

[3] By "his friend," Johnson means Warburton, not Dobson.

Digitized by Google

that we see but little, and that the order of the universe is beyond our comprehension—an opinion not very uncommon; and that there is a chain of subordinate beings "from infinite to nothing," of which himself and his readers are equally ignorant. But he gives us one comfort which, without his help, he supposes unattainable, in the position "that though we are fools, yet God is wise."

This Essay affords an egregious instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendour of imagery, and the seductive powers of eloquence. Never was penury of knowledge, and vulgarity of sentiment, so happily disguised. The reader feels his mind full, though he learns nothing, and when he meets it in its new array, no longer knows the talk of his mother and his nurse. When these wonder-working sounds sink into sense, and the doctrine of the Essay, disrobed of its ornaments, is left to the powers of its naked excellence, what shall we discover? That we are, in comparison with our Creator, very weak and ignorant,—that we do not uphold the chain of existence—and that we could not make one another with more skill than we are made. We may learn yet more,—that the arts of human life were copied from the instinctive operations of other animals,—that if the world be made for man, it may be said that man was made for geese.[1] To these profound principles of natural knowledge are added some moral instructions equally new,—that self interest, well understood, will produce social concord—that men are mutual gainers by mutual benefits—that evil is sometimes balanced by good—that human advantages are unstable and fallacious, of uncertain duration and doubtful effect—that our true honour is not to have a great part, but to act it well—that virtue only is our own—and that happiness is always in our power. Surely a man of no very comprehensive search may venture to say that he has heard all this before; but it was never till now recommended by such a blaze of embellishments, or such sweetness of melody. The vigorous contraction of some thoughts, the luxuriant amplification of others, the incidental illustrations, and sometimes the dignity, sometimes the softness of the verse, enchain philosophy, suspend criticism, and oppress judgment

[1] This sort of burlesque abstract, which may be so easily but so unjustly made of any composition whatever, is exactly similar to the imperfect and unfair representation which the same critic has given of the beautiful imagery in Il Penseroso of Milton.—WARTON.

Johnson's criticism of a poem like this, cannot be compared with his futile declamation against the imagery of the Penseroso. For in speaking of the Penseroso, Johnson spoke of what I do not hesitate to say he did not understand. He had no congenial feelings properly to appreciate the character of such poetry; but the case is different where he brings his great mind to try, by the test of truth, arguments and doctrines which appeal to the understanding. Johnson was not an inadequate judge of Pope's philosophy, though he was certainly so of Milton's poetry. But no composition could possibly stand before his contemptuous declamation.—BOWLES.

Digitized by Google

by overpowering pleasure. This is true of many paragraphs, yet if I had undertaken to exemplify Pope's felicity of composition before a rigid critic, I should not select the Essay on Man; for it contains more lines unsuccessfully laboured, more harshness of diction, more thoughts imperfectly expressed, more levity without elegance, and more heaviness without strength, than will easily be found in all his other works.—JOHNSON.

Pope has not wandered into any useless digressions; has employed no fictions, no tale or story, and has relied chiefly on the poetry of his style for the purpose of interesting his readers. His style is concise and figurative, forcible and elegant. He has many metaphors and images, artfully interspersed in the driest passages, which stood most in need of such ornaments. Nevertheless there are too many lines, in this performance, plain and prosaic. If any beauty be uncommonly transcendent and peculiar, it is brevity of diction, which, in a few instances, and those perhaps pardonable, has occasioned obscurity. It is hardly to be imagined how much sense, how much thinking, how much observation on human life, is condensed together in a small compass.

The late Lord Bathurst repeatedly assured me that he had read the whole scheme of the Essay on Man, in the handwriting of Bolingbroke, and drawn up in a series of propositions, which Pope was to amplify, versify, and illustrate. It has been alleged that Pope did not fully comprehend the drift of the system communicated to him by Bolingbroke, but the remarkable words of his intimate friend, Mr. Jonathan Richardson, a man of known integrity and honour, clearly evince that he did. To the testimony of Richardson, which is decisive, I will now add that Lord Lyttelton, with his usual frankness and ingenuity, assured me that he had frequently talked with Pope on the subject, whose opinions were at that time conformable to his own, when he and his friends were too much inclined to deism. Mr. Harte more than once assured me, that he had seen the pressing letter Dr. Young wrote to Pope, urging him to write something on the side of revelation, to which he alluded in the first Night Thought:

> O! had he pressed his theme, pursued the track
> Which opens out of darkness into day!
> O! had he mounted on his wing of fire,
> Soared when I sink, and sung immortal man.

And when Harte frequently made the same request, he used to answer, "No, no! You have already done it," alluding to Harte's Essay on Reason, which Harte thought a lame apology, and hardly serious.—WARTON.

The ground of the Essay on Man is philosophy, not poetry. The poetry is only the colouring, if I may say so, and to the colouring

Digitized by Google

the eye is chiefly attentive. We hardly think of the philosophy whether it is good or bad; whether it is profound or specious; whether it evinces deep thinking, or exhibits only in new and pompous array the "babble of the nurse." Scarcely any one, till a controversy was raised, thought of the doctrines, but a thousand must have been warmed by the pictures, the addresses, the sublime interspersions of description, and the nice and harmonious precision of every word, and of almost every line. Whether, as a system of philosophy, it inculcated fate or not, no one paused to inquire;[1] but every eye read a thousand times, and every lip, perhaps, repeated, "Lo, the poor Indian," "The lamb thy riot," "Oh, happiness," and many other passages. All these illustrative and secondary images are painted from the source of genuine poetry; from nature, not from art. They therefore, independent of powers displayed in the versification, raise the Essay on Man, considered in the abstract, into genuine poetry, although the poetical part is subservient to the philosophical.

It must be confessed, unfair as Johnson's criticism is, it is not entirely destitute of truth. Many of Pope's conclusions in this Essay, after a vast deal of fine verbiage and apparent argument, are such as required very little proof,—"though man's a fool, yet God is wise,"—and many other axioms equally true. But can we say the whole exhibits only a train of tritenesses? "Materiam superabat opus," it is acknowledged; and possibly, had it been more recondite, it could not have been made the vehicle of so many acknowledged beauties of expression, of imagery, and of poetic illustration. The more it is read the more it will be relished, and the more will the nice precision of every word, and the general beauty of its structure, be acknowledged. Though the treasures of knowledge within be not, perhaps, either very rich or rare, yet, to say it contains no striking sentiments, no truths placed in a more advanced as well as a more pleasing light, would be a manifest and palpable injustice. After all, poetry is not a good vehicle for philosophy, but as a philosophical poem, take it altogether, it would not be very easy, with the exception of Lucretius, to find its equal.—Bowles.

Bolingbroke amused his unwelcome leisure during his exile in studying the infidel philosophy which prevailed in France. The vices of his nature are conspicuous in his metaphysical writings. He pretends to abstruse learning, and it is apparent that he has done little more than pick up fragments of systems at second-hand.

[1] Bowles himself had a low opinion of the "system of philosophy" embodied in the Essay on Man. After stating that Pope was the pupil of Bolingbroke, he adds, "But this poem will continue to charm from the music of its verse, the splendour of its diction, and the beauty of its illustrations, when the philosophy that gave rise to it, like the coarse manure that fed the flowers, is perceived and remembered no more."

Digitized by Google

He assumes a commanding superiority over his illustrious predecessors, of whom he commonly speaks with insane contempt, and he has not enunciated a single new doctrine, or put one old doctrine in a novel light. He affects to soar above sinister motives and prejudices, and writes with the rancour of a bitter partisan who is the creature of passion. He denounces the dishonesty of christian apologists, and perpetually misrepresents them; he inveighs against their inconsistencies, and falls himself into repeated contradictions. The characteristics of the old political debater are preserved intact in the philosopher. He kept his parliamentary style with the rest, —the diffuse rhetoric, the constant repetitions, the lengthy preparation for ideas not worth the prelude. The mind droops over the pretentious verbiage, and the magnificent promise of results which never come. "Who," said Burke, "now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through?"[1] The cheat once detected, no one wearies himself in the pursuit of a flying phantom.

In 1723 Bolingbroke was permitted to return to England. After a short visit he went back to France, and did not settle here till October, 1724. He soon contracted an intimacy with Pope, and imparted to him his irreligious metaphysics. Bolingbroke's knowledge of philosophy, though not profound, was respectable, and with the uninformed he could disguise his want of depth by a flux of specious language. Pope, ignorant of mental, moral, and theological science, mistook his oracular arrogance for real supremacy, his discordant sophisms for demonstrations, his hackneyed plagiarisms for originality. He thought him by much the greatest man he had ever known, and of all his titles to fame the chief he imagined was as a "writer and philosopher."[2] He ranked him among the metaphysical luminaries of the world, and never suspected that the moment his disquisitions were communicated to the public they would be tossed aside with disdain, and consigned to lasting neglect.

Bolingbroke persuaded Pope to versify portions of the philosophy he admired so extravagantly.[3] A large scheme was drawn up, the outline of which Pope repeated to Spence. "The first book, you know, of my ethic work is on the Nature of Man. The second would have been on knowledge and its limits. Here would have come in an essay on education, part of which I have inserted in the Dunciad. The third was to have treated of government, both ecclesiastical and civil. The fourth would have been on morality in eight or nine of the most concerning branches of it, four of which would

[1] Burke's Works, ed. 1808, vol. v. p. 172.

[2] Spence, p. 108, 127.

[3] Essay on Man, Epist. iv. ver. 391. Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 40. "You have begun at my request the work which I have wished long that you would undertake."

Digitized by Google

have been the two extremes to each of the cardinal virtues."[1] These four cardinal virtues,—justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude—would alone have required twelve epistles, since every virtue was to be treated on the Aristotelian plan, and divided into rational medium, deficiency, and excess. The cardinal virtues were either to be again subdivided, or else supplemented by subordinate virtues, and all were to be presented under the triple form. "Each class," said Pope, speaking of the "eight or nine most concerning branches" of morality, "may take up three epistles: one, for instance, against Avarice; another against Prodigality: and the third on the moderate use of Riches, and so of the rest."[2] A short trial convinced Pope that the scheme was too vast for a slow composer. When the first book, which forms the Essay on Man, was completed, he told Spence that "he had drawn in the plan much narrower than it was at first," and he attached to some copies of the Essay, which he circulated among his particular friends, a table of this diminished frame-work.

"INDEX TO THE ETHIC EPISTLES.

BOOK I.—OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN.

Epistle 1.—With respect to the Universe.
" 2.—As an Individual.
" 3.—With respect to Society.
" 4.—With respect to Happiness.

BOOK II.—OF THE USE OF THINGS.

Of the Limits of Human Reason.
Of the Use of Learning.
Of the Use of Wit.
Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men.
Of the Particular Characters of Women.
Of the Principles and Use of Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity.
Of the Use of Education.
A View of the Equality of Happiness in the several Conditions of Men.
Of the Use of Riches."[3]

The cardinal virtues, with nearly all "the most concerning branches of morality," were omitted from the abbreviated plan, which was still too large for Pope's patience, and he left much of the work unexecuted.

He commenced with some of the topics enumerated in the second book of his "index." "Bid Pope talk to you of the work he is about," wrote Bolingbroke to Swift, Nov. 19, 1729. "It is a fine one, and will be, in his hands, an original. His sole complaint is that he finds it too easy in the execution. This flatters his laziness. It flatters my judgment who always thought that, universal as his

[1] Spence, p. 238. [2] Spence, p. 36.
[3] Spence, p. 103.

Digitized by Google

talents are, this is eminently and peculiarly his above all the writers I know, living or dead. I do not except Horace." "The work," adds Pope, "which Lord Bolingbroke speaks of with such abundant partiality is a system of ethics in the Horatian way." Bolingbroke's comparison of the work to Horace, and Pope's phrase "the Horatian way," show that they spoke of the Moral Essays, which, with the Essay on Man, were at first included under the general title of Ethic Epistles. The resemblance to Horace would not apply to the Essay on Man in substance or style,—not in style, for Pope says himself that the Essay was modelled on "the grave march of Lucretius" in contradistinction to the familiar "gaieties of Horace,"[1]; not in substance, for Horace did not write a philosophical poem on natural religion, nor could he have been placed by Bolingbroke at the head of a class of philosophical poets to which he in no way belonged. Neither could Bolingbroke have said of Pope that "the talent eminently and peculiarly his, above all writers living or dead," was the power of sounding the depths of philosophy. The praise was intended for the satiric sketches of men and manners which make up the Moral Essays. These are truly in the "Horatian way," and in a vein characteristic of the bent of Pope's mind.

Bolingbroke furnished little or nothing to the Horatian epistles. His services commenced with the Essay on Man. Pope was revolving this part of the scheme in May, 1730, when he said to Spence, "The first epistle is to be to the whole work what a scale is to a book of maps; and in this, I reckon, lies my greatest difficulty: not only in settling and ranging the parts of it aright, but in making them agreeable enough to be read with pleasure."[2] A few months later Bolingbroke writes to Lord Bathurst, Oct. 8, 1730, that he and Pope "are at present deep in metaphysics." The matter intended for the first epistle was expanded into four epistles as the work proceeded, and in August, 1731, Bolingbroke announced to Swift that three of them were completed, and that the fourth was in hand. Eighteen months more elapsed before any portion of the poem was published; and Pope doubtless spent the interval in repeated revisions. It was not his habit to go straight forward in regular order, and leave no gaps or flaws as he went along. When he told Caryll in December, 1730, that he was "writing on life and manners, not exclusive of religious regards," he adds, "I have many fragments which I am beginning to put together, but nothing perfect or finished, nor in any condition to be shown, except to a friend at a fire-side." This system of composing disjointed fragments, and methodising them afterwards, was unfavourable to continuity and comprehension of thought, and did not help to diminish

[1] Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734.
[2] Spence, p. 12.

Digitized by Google

the want of connection in his arguments, and of consistency in his opinions.

The project of the Essay on Man was kept a secret from all but a few of Pope's friends. To others he only spoke of his ethic epistles in the "Horatian way." Caryll, on hearing from him that he had taken to religion and morals, recommended Pascal's Thoughts, and Pope answered, Feb. 6, 1731, "I have been beforehand with you in it, but he will be of little use to my design, which is rather to ridicule ill men than to preach to them. I fear our age is past all other correction." The Essay on Man was then in full progress, and Pope sent a false report that the style and tenor of the work might not betray him when it was published. The first epistle appeared anonymously in February, 1733, and to divert suspicion, the poet put forth in January, with his name, his Epistle on the Use of Riches, and a week or two afterwards one of his Imitations of Horace. He had a subtler contrivance for misleading the public. He made "lane" rhyme to "name" in his second epistle, and told Harte the bad rhyme was a disguise to escape detection. "Harte remembered," says Warton, "to have often heard it urged in enquiries about the author, whilst he was unknown, that it was impossible it could be Pope's on account of this very passage."[1] Along with "lane" and "name," the first and second epistles contained the rhymes which follow: "here, refer—pierce, universe,—above, Jove—plain, man—fault, ought—food, blood—home, come—abodes, gods—appears, bears—alone, none—race, grass—flood, wood—want, elephant—join, line—alone, one—mourns, burns—sphere, bear—rest, beast—sphere, fair—boast, frost—road, God—preferred, guard—tossed, coast—joined, mind—caprice, vice." There must have been some strange peculiarity in the ears of a generation which could be revolted by "lane" and "name," and welcome such rhymes as these. The anecdote cannot be correct. A liberal admixture of faulty rhymes is a common characteristic of Pope, and the disguise would have been greater if all the rhymes had been good.[2]

Johnson has told Pope's motive for publishing the Essay anony-

[1] Warton's Essay on the Genius of Pope, 5th ed. vol. ii. p. 149.

[2] "It may safely," says Lord Kames, "be pronounced a capital defect in the composition of a verse, to put a low word, incapable of an accent, in the place where this accent should be," and he instances the last syllable of "dependencies," in Pope's Essay on Man, Epist. i. ver. 30:

> But of this frame, the bearings and the ties,
> The strong connections, nice dependencies,
> Gradations just, &c.

What appeared a defect to Lord Kames will seem to many persons an advantage. The want of accent softens the rhyme, and relieves the monotonous, cloying effect of a full concord of sound. In most of Pope's imperfect rhymes the similarity of sound is too slight, and the ear is disappointed.

Digitized by Google

mously, and the manœuvres he practised to secure commendation. He had previously, when speaking to Swift of the Essay, professed his usual indifference to praise. "I agree with you," he said, Dec. 1, 1731, "in my contempt of most popularity, fame, &c. Even as a writer I am cool in it, and whenever you see what I am now writing, you will be convinced I would please but a few, and, if I could, make mankind less admirers and greater reasoners." After the little plot had been played out, he still kept up the false pretence in a letter to Duncombe, Oct. 20, 1734. "Truly, I had not the least thought of stealing applause by suppressing my name to that Essay. I wanted only to hear truth, and was more afraid of my partial friends than enemies."[1] He lifted up the mask with Swift, and avowed that his object was to get his philosophy approved. "The design of concealing myself was good," he said, Sept. 15, 1734, "and had its full effect; I was thought a divine, a philosopher, and what not, and my doctrine had a sanction I could not have given to it." He knew that friend and foe were aware that philosophy and divinity were not his strength, and he wished to obtain a fictitious authority for his work. He said to Caryll, March 8, 1733, "It is attributed, I think with reason, to a divine," and the poet had probably circulated the report he affected to believe. "I perceive the divines have no objection to it," he wrote again on March 20, "though now it is agreed not to be written by one,—Dr. Croxall, Dr. Secker, and some others having solemnly denied it." The first reports decided the popular judgment. The orthodoxy of the poem was taken upon trust, and when Pope owned the work in 1734, no one cared to commence a fresh inquisition.

An infidel who hated divines and divinity with all his heart, had dictated the doctrines of the Essay on Man. "He mentioned then, and at several other times," says Spence, in his record of Pope's conversation during the years 1734—36, "how much, or rather how wholly he was obliged to Lord Bolingbroke for the thoughts and reasonings in his moral work; and once in particular said, that beside their frequent talking over that subject together, he had received, I think, seven or eight sheets from Lord Bolingbroke in relation to it (as I apprehended by way of letters), both to direct the plan in general, and to supply the matter for the particular epistles."[2] Pope frankly informed the world, in the Essay itself, that he echoed the lessons of Bolingbroke, who was his "guide and philosopher,"—the "master of the poet and the song." The prose sketch of the "master" was seen by Lord Bathurst at the time, and he testified to Warton and Blair from personal knowledge, that Pope versified the arguments set down for him by Bolingbroke.

[1] Letters by Eminent Persons, 2nd ed. vol. ii. p. 48.
[2] Spence, p. 108.

Digitized by Google

Warburton reversed the parts. The "seven or eight sheets," which contained Bolingbroke's prose draught of the Essay on Man, have not been preserved in their original form, and he did not reduce his published philosophy to writing till after the poem was commenced. "If," said Warburton, in allusion to the latter circumstance, "you will take his lordship's word, or, indeed, attend to his argument, you will find that Pope was so far from putting his prose into verse that he has put Pope's verse into prose."[1] But when Bolingbroke mentioned that the Essay on Man was begun before his published disquisitions were committed to paper, he added that they were "nothing more than repetitions of conversations" with Pope.[2] This statement Warburton was dishonest enough to suppress, and deliberately turned a half truth into a falsehood. The ungarbled expressions of Bolingbroke confirm the assurances of Pope and Bathurst, that he was the principal author of the philosophy in the Essay on Man. Warburton could not keep to his misrepresentation. When it was convenient for his purpose he changed his story, and Pope became "a pupil who had to be reasoned out of Bolingbroke's hands," —a dupe who adopted Bolingbroke's insidious doctrines without perceiving the infidelity, and who had to thank his deliverer that "the poem was put on the side of religion."[3]

Mrs. Mallet told General Grimouard that Pope, Bolingbroke, and their friends, who frequented her house, were "a society of pure deists."[4] Bolingbroke was more of an infidel than Pope, for though he admitted that a future state could not be disproved, he laboured passionately to discredit the arguments in its favour. Pope held to the immortality of the soul. "He was a deist," says Lord Chesterfield, "believing in a future state; this he has often owned himself to me."[5] He frequently avowed his deism to Lyttelton, and acquiesced in the deistical interpretations which the Richardsons put on the Essay on Man. Revelation he rejected entirely. Lord Chesterfield relates that he once saw a bible on his table, and adds, "As I knew his way of thinking upon that book, I asked him jocosely if he was going to write an answer to it?" The evidence that he had renounced christianity comes to us from various independent sources, and some of the witnesses are above the suspicion of misunderstanding or misrepresenting him.

One of the articles of Bolingbroke's deistical creed is said by Warburton to have been concealed from Pope. "A few days before his death," says Warburton, in the statement he drew up for Ruffhead,

[1] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 335.

[2] Bolingbroke's Works, Philadelphia, vol. iii. pp. 40, 45; vol. iv. p. 111.

[3] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 336.

[4] Grimouard, Essai sur Bolingbroke, quoted by Cooke, Memoirs of Bolingbroke, vol. ii. p. 96.

[5] Chesterfield's Works, ed. Mahon, vol. ii. p. 445.

Digitized by Google

"he would be carried to London to dine with Mr. Murray in Lincoln's Inn Fields, whom he loved with the fondness of a father. He was solicitous that Lord Bolingbroke and Mr. Warburton should be of the party. Some time before Mr. Warburton being with Mr. Pope at Twickenham, Mr. Hooke came in, and told us he had supped the night before at Battersea with Lord Bolingbroke, when his lordship in conversation advanced the strangest notions concerning the moral attributes of the Deity, which amounted to an express denial of them. This account gave Mr. Pope much uneasiness, and he told Mr. Hooke with much peevish heat that he was sure he was mistaken. The other replied as warmly that he thought he had sense enough not to mistake a man who spoke plainly, and in a language he understood. Here the matter dropped. But Mr. Pope was not easy till he had seen Lord Bolingbroke, and told him what Mr. Hooke said of a late conversation. Lord Bolingbroke assured him that Mr. Hooke misunderstood him. This assurance Mr. Pope with great pleasure acquainted Mr. Warburton with the next time he saw him. But Lord Bolingbroke and Mr. Pope were both so full of this matter that at this dinner at Mr. Murray's, the conversation, amongst other things, naturally turned on this subject, when, from a very suspicious remark of his lordship, Mr. Warburton took occasion to speak of the clearness of our notions concerning the moral attributes. This occasioned some debate, which ended in some warmth on his lordship's side. This anecdote is not improper to be told in vindication of Mr. Pope's religious sentiments, and the reflections on Mr. Warburton, as if he had not attacked his lordship's impiety till after his death."[1] Warburton had previously told the story in his View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, and there he related that Bolingbroke "denied God's moral attributes as they are commonly understood."[2] In the narrative he wrote for Ruffhead, Warburton reports Hooke to have said, that Bolingbroke's "notions concerning the moral attributes amounted to an express denial of them."[3] The first statement Bolingbroke would have allowed to be correct; the second he would have repudiated. The two versions are treated by Warburton as one, and his charge against Bolingbroke, and his "vindication of Mr. Pope's religious sentiments," are based upon this presumed identity of propositions which were quite distinct to Pope and Bolingbroke.

Bolingbroke's views on the moral attributes of the Deity were the

[1] Ruffhead, Life of Pope, p. 219. The manuscript of this passage exists in Warburton's handwriting. Ruffhead altered two or three words, which are here restored from the original.

[2] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 91.

[3] Spence, who wrote down the anecdote from Warburton's conversation, says that Hooke talked of "Lord Bolingbroke's disbelief of the moral attributes of God," which agrees substantially with the language in Ruffhead.

Digitized by Google

result of his mania to get rid of the arguments for a future state. Virtue is frequently oppressed and suffering in this world, and vice prosperous; the wicked defraud, supplant, and persecute the upright; and in manifold ways the felicities of life are not proportioned to the behaviour of men. A righteous Deity, we may be sure, would not ordain a constitution of things in which the good should repeatedly fare worse than the bad, often in consequence of their persistence in goodness, and then perish unrewarded in the midst of their self-denial. The inference is plain that they will be finally compensated in a kingdom to come. The struggle between sin and rectitude in good men continues all their days, and when the battle has been fought out, and the victory won, they are removed from the world. It is incredible that a benevolent ruler should set us to maintain a painful conflict with evil, and when we are disciplined to holiness should consign us to annihilation. The hope that well-doing will not go unrewarded, the apprehension that wickedness will not go unpunished, are sentiments engrained in the heart of man, and we may be confident that the source of all truth would not direct us to govern our conduct by false anticipations. The supposition that there is no future life is therefore inconsistent with the moral attributes of God, and to avoid this deduction Bolingbroke took up the theory of one of the worst class of deists, and contended that the moral attributes of the Creator were not the same as in our ideas, and could not be judged by our notions. He said he "ascribed all conceivable perfections to God," and that he was as "far from denying his justice and goodness as his wisdom and power," but insisted that his justice and goodness differed from ours in kind as well as in degree.[1] Wherever this hypothesis was brought in, the epithets "just and good" either ceased to have any meaning for us, or they meant exactly the reverse of "just and good." The object of the theory was, indeed, to set up the maxim that conduct which would be thought immoral among men might be the morality of God. Bolingbroke's philosophic vision was limited to a single point at a time. He abounds in astounding contradictions from his inability to keep his most emphatic principles before his mind, and he might be answered, without a word of comment, by ranging in parallel columns the passages of his writings which are mutually destructive. His hypothesis on the moral attributes of the Deity shared the usual fate of his dogmas. He denounced the doctrine of predestination, and called it "blasphemous," "impious," "devilish," because it was "scandalously repugnant to our ideas of God's moral perfections," and supposed "a God such as no one could acknowledge."[2] The moment he had to deal with an opinion he disliked, he thought it

[1] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 320.

[2] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. pp. 23, 24; vol. iii. p. 430.

Digitized by Google

impious to imagine that the morality of God was not in conformity with our ideas, and he loudly appealed to the immutability of those innate moral convictions which alike defy the corrupt morality of libertines who labour to justify evil, and the artificial morality of metaphysicians who strive to prop up fanciful systems.

Warburton might fairly argue, that the theory which maintained that the morality of the Deity was radically different in kind from the moral conceptions of men, "amounted to an express denial of God's moral attributes." He was not entitled to charge upon Bolingbroke an inference he had vehemently disclaimed in his writings, and which was so far from seeming necessary to all pious thinkers that some distinguished christian divines had held the obnoxious hypothesis. No two of them might have been of a mind in the application of a principle the limits of which they could none of them pretend to define, but they would all have concurred with Bolingbroke that to deny the moral attributes of God, and to assert that they were not the same as in our ideas, were distinct propositions. The false turn which Warburton gave to his story is clear from the sequel of his narrative. Pope brought him and Bolingbroke together. The philosopher and his pupil, full of Hooke's accusation, introduced the subject of their own accord. Bolingbroke advanced opinions on the moral attributes which Warburton combated, and the debate ended, as it began, in a total disagreement. The views which Bolingbroke volunteered could not, for shame, be those which he had just disclaimed to Pope, and they were notwithstanding quite unorthodox in the estimation of Warburton. The case is simple. Bolingbroke protested to Pope, what he had protested all along, that he did not deny the moral attributes of God, and he maintained against Warburton in Pope's presence, what he had all along avowed, that they were not the same as in our ideas.

There is more, and conclusive evidence, that Bolingbroke had not concealed his hypothesis from Pope. The incidents narrated by Warburton occurred a few days before the poet's death. The philosophical papers of Bolingbroke were "all communicated to him in scraps as they were occasionally written,"[1] and the whole must already have passed through his hands. In these disquisitions Bolingbroke enforced his view of the divine attributes with tedious diffuseness, incessant reiteration, and unmeasured warmth. No opinion is brought out into stronger relief. A glance at the manuscript must have revealed the hypothesis to Pope, and the Essay on Man proves that he had actually adopted it. All who believed that justice, goodness, and truth were immutable, thought that our primary duty was to contemplate them in the Deity, and endeavour to imitate his perfections. Pope followed Bolingbroke in rejecting

[1] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 111.

Digitized by Google

the idea. Man, he said, could "just find a God" and nothing more; consequently man was to be the only study of man.[1] Master and pupil agreed that every perfection was to be ascribed to God, and that he was to be loved, worshipped, and obeyed. But the pupil, like the master, held that "God did not show his own nature in his laws, because though they proceed from the divine intelligence they are adapted to the human,"[2] and the last line of the Essay on Man, the emphatic summary of a leading article in Pope's creed, is that "all our knowledge is ourselves to know."

In a subsequent passage Warburton extended his assertion, and alleged that Bolingbroke concealed the whole purpose of his theology from Pope. "The poet," says Warburton, "directs his argument against atheists and libertines in support of religion; the philosopher against divines in support of naturalism. But his lordship thought fit to keep this a secret from his friend as well as from the public."[3] The poet and the philosopher were both deists. The philosopher, Warburton tells us, communicated his principles to associates "who gave him to understand how much they detested them."[4] The poet professed deism before Chesterfield, Lyttelton, the Richardsons and the Mallets. Yet Warburton would have us believe that Bolingbroke disclosed his infidelity to unsympathising friends, and kept it a secret from his chief philosophical intimate, who frankly avowed his own deism in the Bolingbroke circle. The statement, incredible in itself, is opposed to the positive testimony of Bolingbroke when he says that all his written opinions were only the record of his conversations with Pope, and is even contradicted by the unconscious testimony of Warburton. He tells us that when Pope took refuge under his shield the circumstance which most exasperated Bolingbroke was that "he saw a great number of lines appear which, out of complaisance, had been struck out of the MS., and which, at the commentator's request, being now restored to their places, no longer left the religious sentiments of the poet equivocal."[5] The restored lines which modified any "religious sentiment" were barely half a dozen, and were confined to the single tenet of a future state. When Pope allowed his belief in a future state to seem "equivocal, out of complaisance" to his "guide," the infidelity of Bolingbroke could not have been unknown to him.

Still the plea of Warburton remains, that Bolingbroke was for deism and Pope for christianity. Bolingbroke, says Warburton, argued for natural religion in opposition to revealed; Pope for

[1] Essay on Man, Epist. ii. ver. 1; iv. ver. 398, and the additional couplet in the note.

[2] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. pp. 175, 152.

[3] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 335.

[4] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 88.

[5] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 336.

Digitized by Google

revealed religion as a necessary supplement to natural. Warburton refuted his own position in the attempt to establish it. He appealed to three passages in the Essay on Man. The first, which he calls the chief, is Epist. ii. ver. 149—160, where Pope terms "reason a weak queen," which obeys the ruling passion. "The poet," says Warburton, "leaves reason unrelieved. What is this but an intimation that we ought to seek for a cure in that religion, which only dares profess to give it?"[1] The poet, on the contrary, immediately proceeds to show how reason can "rectify" the ruling passion, and finally concludes, ver. 197, that "reason the bias turns to good from ill." He insists that there is not a virtue under heaven which "pride" or "shame," rectified by reason, will not produce, ver. 193, and he informs us, ver. 183, that they are the "surest virtues" known to man. The second passage is Epist. iii. ver. 287, where, "speaking," says Warburton, "of the great restorers of the religion of nature, the poet intimates that they could only draw God's shadow, not his image:

> Relumed her ancient light, not kindled new,
> If not God's image, yet his shadow drew:

as reverencing that truth which telleth us this discovery was reserved for the 'glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.'"[2] Pope was careful to show in his poem that his meaning was the reverse of what Warburton pretends. He conceives that God's image was hidden from our view, and that man, not God, was our proper study:

> Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
> The proper study of mankind is man.

He did not believe that the religion of nature, in this particular, was under any disadvantage, for he said, Epist. iii. ver. 148, that "the state of nature was the reign of God," and to "relume the ancient light" was, to his apprehension, the perfection of theology. The third passage is Epist. iv. 341—344, where Pope says, that "hope lengthened on to faith pours the bliss that fills up all the mind." "But natural religion," says Warburton, "never lengthened hope on to faith, nor did any religion, but the christian, ever conceive that faith could fill the mind with happiness."[3] Pope was of a different opinion. Hope and faith, according to his creed, and that of many deists, were part of the religion of nature.[4] He could not think otherwise when he "was a deist believing in a future state," and he was so far from supposing that the christian's faith had any supe-

[1] Warburton, Note on Epist. ii. ver. 149.
[2] Warburton, Note on Epist. iii. ver. 303.
[3] Warburton, Note on Epist. iii. ver. 303.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 274; Epist. iii. ver. 286.

Digitized by Google

riority over the deist's in filling the mind with bliss, that all who "fought for modes of faith" were, in his estimation, "graceless zealots."[1] The searching acumen of Warburton, who never had his equal in forcing false meanings from his text, could not discover another allusion to christianity. His interpretations, strained at best, are directly opposed to the context, and this failure to detect one word which could honestly support his construction, leaves no doubt that the Essay on Man was intended for a system of natural religion to the exclusion of revealed.

The poet and his "guide" agreed in repudiating christianity. They differed on the question of a future state, but Pope, while rejecting Bolingbroke's conclusion, adopted his premises. "The fourth epistle he is now intent upon," wrote Bolingbroke to Swift, Aug. 2, 1731. "It is a noble subject. He pleads the cause of God, I use Seneca's expression, against that famous charge which atheists in all ages have brought, the supposed unequal dispensations of Providence,—a charge which I cannot heartily forgive your divines for admitting. You admit it, indeed, for an extreme good purpose, and you build on this admission the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments. But what if you should find that this future state will not account, in opposition to the atheist, for God's justice in the present state which you give up? Would it not have been better to defend God's justice in this world, against these daring men, by irrefragable reasons, and to have rested the proof of the other point on revelation? You will not understand by what I have said that Pope will go so deep into the argument, or carry it so far as I have hinted." To rest the proof of a future state on revelation, was in Bolingbroke's estimation to build upon a fable. To abandon the proof from reason was therefore with him to relinquish the doctrine. Pope, who had accepted the theory that the justice of God could not be judged by our ideas, embraced the second and superfluous paradox, that the dispensations of God in this world were never unequal. On either ground, said Bolingbroke, the justice of God did not require a future state. The poet had rejected the witness of revelation to the immortality of the soul, and, under the pretext of "pleading the cause of God against atheists," his "guide" had persuaded him to give up the popular proof from reason. He stopped short of the inference that reason did not countenance a future state, or, in Bolingbroke's phrase, "he did not go so deep into the argument." His "guide" laughed at his inconsequence, and "could not," says Warburton, "forbear making the poet, then alive and at his devotion, the frequent topic of his ridicule amongst their common acquaintance as a man who understood nothing of his own principles, nor saw to what they naturally tended."[2]

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 305.

[2] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. p. 335.

Digitized by Google

Bolingbroke was not entitled to ridicule Pope. The docile pupil was not more blind to the reach of the principles instilled into him than was the arrogant master who imposed them. He said the notion that a future world could be essential to vindicate this world was not only needless, but blasphemous. He was never weary of railing at the impiety of the doctrine, and he pretended that the divines who held it "renounced God as much as the rankest of the atheistical tribe."[1] He did not see that the alleged impiety was the identical principle he adopted for the foundation of his philosophy, when, admitting the evils on our globe, he contended that they were linked to a larger scheme which would explain and justify them. "The universe," he said, "is an immense aggregate of systems. Atheists and divines cannot, or will not conceive, that the seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary to the real perfection of the whole."[2] He wronged the divines. They could, and did "conceive that the fitness of the particular portions of a scheme must depend upon their relation to the entire plan," and it was precisely because they argued that the justice of God in this world would be incomprehensible unless we extended our view to the world to come, that Bolingbroke charged them with accusing the Deity of injustice, and ranked them with atheists. The incapacity to understand his own principles could not be carried further.

Pope did not intend to proclaim openly to the world the deism he disclosed to his sceptical companions. "I know," wrote Bolingbroke, "your precaution enough to know that you will screen yourself against any direct charge of heterodoxy."[3] His plan was to put forth a scheme of natural religion without repudiating christianity in terms, that he might be able to give his poem any interpretation he pleased. He soon manifested his double design. Before he avowed himself the author of the Essay on Man, he was anxious that Caryll should be convinced of its orthodoxy. "Out of complaisance" to Bolingbroke, he had left undecided the question of the immortality of the soul:

> *If* to be perfect in a certain state,
> What matter, here or there, or soon or late?

He feared that this dubious language would be distasteful to Caryll, and thus wrote to him on March 8, 1733. "The town is now very full of a new poem, entitled an Essay on Man. It has merit, in my opinion, but not so much as they give it. At least, it is incorrect, and

[1] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 436.

[2] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. pp. 333, 366. "The imperfection of the parts," says Leibnitz, Opera, p. 638, "produce a greater perfection in the whole." According to his custom, Bolingbroke copied Leibnitz without naming him.

[3] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 41.

Digitized by Google

has some inaccuracies in the expressions,—one or two of an unhappy kind, for they may cause the author's sense to be turned, contrary to what I think his intention, a little unorthodoxically. Nothing is so plain, as that he quits his proper subject, this present world, to assert his belief of a future state, and yet there is an *if* instead of a *since* that would overthrow his meaning."[1] Pope several times reprinted the poem with corrections, but never altered the word which misrepresented his creed on the question whether death was annihilation or immortality. He had a public version, which he adopted "out of complaisance to Bolingbroke," overborne by his showy rhetoric and imperious dogmatism, and a private version for his pious friend, to whom he professed that his conditional language was an "inaccuracy of expression which overthrew his meaning."

Pope's private profession of his belief in a future state was his real conviction. He proceeded to belie his true opinions, by standing up for the christianity of the Essay on Man. "The author," he says, "uses the words 'God the soul of the world,' which, at the first glance, may be taken for heathenism, while his whole paragraph proves him quite christian in his system, from man up to seraphim." Caryll was not convinced, and on October 23 Pope wrote to reassure him. "I believe the author of the Essay on Man will end his poem in such a manner as will satisfy your scruple. I think it impossible for him, with any congruity to his confined and strictly philosophical subject, to mention our Saviour directly; but he may magnify the christian doctrine as the perfection of all moral; nay, and even, I fancy, quote the very words of the Gospel precept, that includes all the law and the precepts, *Thou shalt love God above all things*, &c., and I conclude that will remove all possible occasion of scandal." He wrote again to the same effect on January 1, 1734:—"To the best of my judgment the author shows himself a christian at last in the assertion, that all earthly happiness, as well as future felicity, depends upon the doctrine of the Gospel,—love of God and man,—and that the whole aim of our being is to attain happiness here and hereafter by the practice of universal charity to man, and entire resignation to God. More particular than this he could not be with any regard to the subject, or manner in which he treated it." From the next letter of the poet, on February 28, it would appear that the "scruple" of Caryll was removed, influenced, perhaps, by the discovery that the work was Pope's own production. "Your candid opinion," says Pope, "not only on the Essay on Man, but its author, pleases me truly. I think verily he is as honest, and as religious a man as myself, and one that will never forfeit justly your kind character of him. It is not directly owned, and I do assure you never was whilst you were kept in ignorance of it."[2] The explanations

[1] Pope's Correspondence, ed. Elwin, vol. i. p. 339.

[2] Pope's Correspondence, vol. i. pp. 339, 345, 346, 348,

Digitized by Google

which satisfied Caryll should have increased his suspicions, for Pope's language was plainly evasive. He rested the whole of his christianity on the doctrines which were held by a large class of deists. He neither avowed his faith in Christ, nor declared his belief that the Gospels were a revelation from God. He had drawn upon Wollaston's admirable work, The Religion of Nature Delineated, and there he had seen how inevitably a christian, who presses the arguments for natural religion, must sometimes refer to the fuller evidence of Scripture, and adopt a tone which would make it impossible that he could be mistaken for a deist. With this model under his eyes, and with the professed desire "to show himself a christian," and "remove all possible occasion of scandal," the ingenuity of the poet was insufficient to devise a single phrase which the majority of English deists would not have subscribed. Even the bare term "christian," which he flourished before Caryll, did not appear in the poem. He kept the word for the ear of the simple country squire, and imposed upon him by the transparent artifice of privately calling the doctrines of deism christianity. The "address," which he told Spence he had "written to our Saviour," would not have contributed to vindicate his orthodoxy, as we may judge from his statement, that it was "imitated from Lucretius's compliment to Epicurus, and omitted by the advice of Berkeley."[1] The application to our Lord of the compliment to Epicurus must have been shocking to Berkeley, and could never have entered into the mind of any one who believed that Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh."

A few persons, not in the secret of Pope's deism, had the discernment to share the first impressions of Caryll. The celebrated David Hartley is said, by his son, to have "regarded the Essay on Man as tending to insinuate that the Divine revelation of the christian religion was superfluous," and to substitute for it "the plagiarisms of modern ethics from christian doctrines." But readers in general were more attentive to the poetry than the philosophy, and did not detect the lurking heresies of the poem till Crousaz published his *Examen de l'Essai de Mr. Pope* in 1737, which he enforced by his more elaborate *Commentaire* in the following year. "Mr. Pope's name, and not his own, spread them," says Dr. Middleton, "into everybody's hands."[2] Hitherto the poet had not been far wrong in his calculation, that his deism would pass unsuspected, because not directly professed, and the tenets he taught explicitly he believed to be so unanswerable, that, in a suppressed passage of the fourth Epistle, he raised a shout of triumph over the "scattered fools who would fly trembling from the heels" of his Pegasus. The comments of Crousaz, often founded upon mistranslations and misconceptions,

[1] Spence, p. 107.
[2] Middleton to Warburton, Jan. 7, 1740.

Digitized by Google

laid bare sufficient sophistries, inconsistencies, and irreligion, to open the eyes of the public. Pope's confidence immediately changed to fright. "He took terror," says Richardson, "about the clergy, and Warburton himself, at the general alarm of its fatalism and deistical tendency." The poet had a dread of incurring the obloquy of any class or profession. "I know," Bolingbroke wrote to him, "how desirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men,"[1] and he confessed that this motive "was what chiefly stopped his going on" with his ethical scheme. "I could not have said what I would have said without provoking every church on the face of the earth, and I did not care for living always in boiling water."[2] He had never intended at any time to risk an attack from the clergy, and when the danger came unexpectedly, it was he himself that "fled trembling from the heels" of threatening foes.

His special fear of Warburton was not without cause. Warburton was the friend of Pope's enemies, Concannen and Theobald, and held Pope cheap both as a man and a poet. Of the poet he wrote to Concannen, Jan. 2, 1727, that Pope "borrowed for want of genius."[3] Of the man he wrote to Hurd, Jan. 2, 1757, "Till his letters were published, I had as indifferent an opinion of his morals as the gentlemen of the Dunciad pretended to have. Mr. Pope knew this, and had the justice to own to me that I fairly followed appearances when I thought well of them, and ill of him."[4] The Essay on Man was especially obnoxious to Warburton. He said that it was collected "from the worst passages of the worst authors,"[5] and that the doctrines were "rank atheism."[6] He did not confine his denunciation of the poem to conversation, but refuted its vicious principles in some formal dissertations which he read at a literary club in Newark.[7] The Dunciad faction, we may be certain, were careful to circulate his asperities, and Pope assisted the malignity of the Dunces by keeping his ears open to all the ill they reported. Warburton had now shown his quality by his treatise on the Alliance between Church and State, and the first books of the Divine Legation. The poet, who was quailing under the assaults of Crousaz, might well be alarmed lest a more formidable enemy should speak to the world the criticisms he propagated in conversation, and in his addresses to the Newark Club. In theology and metaphysics

[1] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 262.

[2] Spence, p. 238.

[3] Watson's Life of Warburton, p. 15.

[4] Warburton's Letters to Hurd, p. 224.

[5] Tyers, Historical Rhapsody, p. 78.

[6] For this we have the authority of Dr. Law, the Bishop of Carlisle, in the preface to his translation of King's Origin of Evil.

[7] Prior's Life of Malone, p. 430. Warton's Pope, vol. i. p. xlv.

Digitized by Google

he was far beyond Pope's "philosopher and guide." He was even more dictatorial and abusive, more over-bearing and contemptuous, more ingenious in his sophistries, and not more scrupulous in the use of his weapons. His moral obliquities, which have half-ruined his reputation with posterity, were of a kind to increase the apprehensions of Pope, who must have submitted in helpless silence to the sweeping, haughty, scornful exposure of the Essay on Man.

When the storm had begun to burst on the defenceless head of Pope, Warburton saw reason to go over to his side, and in December, 1738, commenced an anonymous reply to Crousaz in a monthly publication called the Works of the Learned. An equitable judgment was not among the merits of Warburton. His dogmatic violence could not brook the least concession to an opposing view, and he was always in extremes. While he herded with "the gentlemen of the Dunciad" he was uncompromising in his censure of Pope. He suddenly transferred his advocacy to the enemy, and indulged, with a daring defiance of consistency, in a wild exaggeration of Pope's powers, and a hardy denial of his errors and defects. The man who "borrowed for want of genius," became "the last of the poetic line amongst us, on whom the large patrimony of his whole race is devolved."[1] He had not only inherited the entire gifts of all poets of all times, "he was the maker of a new species of the sublime, so new that we have yet no name for it, though of a nature distinct from every other known beauty of poetry." "The two great perfections in works of genius," Warburton goes on, "are wit and sublimity. Many writers have been witty; some have been sublime; and a few have even possessed both these qualities separately. But none, that I know of, besides our poet, hath had the art to incorporate them. This seems to be the last effort of the imagination to poetical perfection."[2] A single example of Pope's witty sublime is specified by Warburton,—the comparison of Newton to the ape. Unfortunately, this instance of the "new species of the sublime,"—"so new that we have yet no name for it,"—was copied from a Latin poet of the sixteenth century, and was a false conceit without a spark of sublimity or wit.

With the change in his view of Pope's genius, there was a complete revolution in Warburton's estimate of the Essay on Man. The work ceased to be made up "from the worst passages of the worst authors." A superlative originality took the place of ignorant plagiarism, and "he uttered heavy menaces," says Bishop Law, "against those who presumed to insinuate that Pope borrowed anything from any man whatsoever."[3] The "rank atheism," in like

[1] Warburton's Commentary on Mr. Pope's Essay on Man, ed. 1742, p. 182.
[2] Warburton's Pope, Essay on Man, Epist. ii. ver. 31.
[3] Warton's Pope, vol. iii. p. 162.

Digitized by Google

manner, was converted into the purest orthodoxy, and every line breathed forth piety and sound philosophy. "He follows truth," said his advocate, "uniformly throughout."[1] The strain of sickening adulation in which Warburton conveyed his newly-born admiration showed that arrogance was not more congenial to his nature than servility, and both were rivalled by the effrontery with which he spoke of those who shared his old opinions. He and the "gentlemen of the Dunciad" had agreed in thinking ill of Pope's morals, but the conviction was genuine with Warburton, and "pretence" in them.[2] He declaimed against the "rank atheism" of the Essay on Man, but the free-thinkers who had believed that Pope was of "their party" had "affectedly embraced the delusion."[3]

Warburton's accusations of insincerity were the more unblushing that his recantation was partly feigned. When he published his defence of three epistles of the Essay on Man, he said that Pope's "strong and delicate reasoning ran equally through all" the poem, but that "the turn of the fourth epistle being more popular seemed to need no comment."[4] His real motive for passing over the fourth epistle was very different, and comes out in a letter to Dr. Birch, Oct. 25, 1739. "I have been looking over, *inter nos*, the fourth epistle of the Essay on Man; for I have a great inclination to make an analysis of that to complete the whole. I find this part of my defence of Mr. Pope as difficult as a confutation of Mr. Crousaz's nonsense, and a detection of the translator's blunders, are easy. I do not know whether I can do it to my mind, or whether I shall do it at all, so beg you would keep it secret."[5] He left the fourth epistle undefended because it was almost beyond his powers of sophistry to devise a defence, and professed to the world that "the strong and delicate reasoning was too popular to need a comment." Having undertaken the "difficult" task, he kept up the dissimulation, justified every doctrine the epistle contained, and lauded it, in common with the rest of the work, for its "exact reasoning," and for "a precision, force, and closeness of connection rarely to be met with, even in the most formal treatises of philosophy."[6] His want of sincerity would be self-evident without the contradiction between his confidential confessions, and his public praise. No one, with his knowledge of philosophical divinity, could possibly have magnified Pope in good faith for the qualities in which he was deplorably deficient.

[1] Warburton's Commentary on Mr. Pope's Essay on Man, p. 121.

[2] Warburton's Letters to Hurd, p. 224.

[3] Warburton to Dr. Doddridge, Feb. 12, 1739, in Nichols, Illustrations of Literary History, vol. ii. p. 816.

[4] Warburton's Vindication of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man, 1740, p. 83.

[5] Nichols, Illustrations of Literary History, vol. ii. p. 113.

[6] Warburton's Pope, Epist. iv. ver. 394.

Digitized by Google

Dodsley, the bookseller, was present at the first interview between Pope and Warburton, and was astonished at the compliments the poet paid to his commentator.[1] There was no occasion for astonishment. Pope's despiser had turned idolater, "the gentlemen of the Dunciad" had lost their ablest ally, the thrust of Crousaz had been parried, and the champion was the dreaded man who was expected to be a fatal foe. The sensitive novice in philosophy, who was incompetent to fight, and could not endure defeat, was relieved from future as well as present fears. He would not henceforward be answerable to theological and metaphysical assailants. Warburton had assumed the responsibility of the poem, and his irascible, pugnacious vanity was a pledge that he would defend his certificate of orthodoxy with his usual violence, disdain, and ability. The relief to the mind of the anxious poet was immense, and fully explains his headlong gratitude. He immediately renounced his deistical interpretation of the Essay, and adopted all the views of his thundering advocate. "I know I meant just what you explain," wrote the obsequious poet, April 11, 1739, "but I did not explain my own meaning as well as you." He was too eager to live under Warburton's protection to retain a particle of independence. No matter how incredible might be the interpretations which his commentator often fathered upon him, he hastened to accept every one of them without reserve. The public were not deluded, and a letter of Dr. Middleton to Warburton, Jan. 7, 1740, is a fair specimen, expressed in friendly terms, of the common opinion. "You have evinced the orthodoxy of Mr. Pope's principles, but, like the old commentators on his Homer, will be thought, perhaps, in some places to have provided a meaning for him that he himself never dreamed of. However, if you did not find him a philosopher, you will make him one, for he will be wise enough to take the benefit of your reading, and make his future essays more clear and consistent." Pope's moral laxity was not the only cause of the facility with which he changed his creed. The shallowness of his convictions had a share in the event. He had no real insight into theology, natural or revealed. He rejected christianity because his associates sneered at it, and because the age was irreligious. Ignorant of the right road, he was sometimes persuaded that all roads led to a common goal, or he adopted the road which was pointed out to him by his guides. The Essay on Man would never have been written unless Bolingbroke had dictated the subject, and supplied the materials, and Pope was subdued by his dogmatism rather than enlightened by his arguments. The speculations the poet versified had not proceeded from his own mind; he believed as he was prompted; and he had not any rooted convictions to sacrifice when a second dogmatist provided him with more convenient opinions.

[1] Warton's Pope, vol. ix. p. 342.

Digitized by Google

Pope would have been glad "to dwell in ambiguities for ever." In accepting the advocacy of Warburton he was obliged to abandon his equivocal attitude, and disavow the deistical creed. "The infidels and libertines," Warburton wrote to Dr. Stukeley, January 1, 1740, "prided themselves in thinking Mr. Pope of their party. I thought it of use to religion to show so noble a genius was not; and I can have the pleasure of telling you (and have Mr. Pope's own authority for it), that he is not."[1] His chief difficulty must have been to cast off his allegiance to his "philosopher and guide, the master of the poet and the song." But his reputation was at stake, and he did not hesitate. His anxiety to disclaim all sympathy with the theology of the teacher who had furnished the arguments of his poem was shown by one of his habitual frauds. He published, in 1741, his correspondence with Swift, and in the printed letter of December, 1725, he says, "Lord B. is above trifling; when he writes of anything in this world, he is more than mortal: if ever he trifles it must be when he turns a divine." A copy of the letter is among the Oxford papers at Longleat, and there we find that the words he really used were, "Lord B. is above trifling; he is grown a great divine." Pope reversed the language of the original passage that he might seem to the world to have contemned the divinity of Bolingbroke long before the Essay on Man appeared. The fraud had the intended effect with Pope's friends. Lord Mansfield inferred from the fabricated version that "Pope not only condemned but despised the futility of Bolingbroke's reasoning against revelation;" and Warburton quoted the sentence for an evidence of Pope's opinion "that no subject but religion could have sunk his lordship so far below the class of reputable authors."[2] Bolingbroke, ignorant of the trick, remained upon cordial terms with Pope, and did not outwardly resent his defection. The discarded master had a double motive for his forbearance. No man was more vulnerable, and he would have feared to provoke the malignity of the satirist. He was anxious in his life-time to conceal his infidelity from the outer world, and he could not expose the inconsistencies of the poet without revealing his own unbelief. "I have been a martyr of faction in politics," he once wrote to Pope, "and have no vocation to be so in philosophy."[3] Inwardly he was deeply mortified that "the song" he had inspired should be wrested to a meaning he disowned, that his admiring scholar should bow down no longer to his sceptical sophistries, and that the idol who supplanted him should belong to that priestly order of which he never spoke without scorn. His suppressed indignation, inflamed by fresh offences, broke out after Pope was dead.

[1] Nichols, Illustrations of Lit. Hist., vol. ii. p. 53.
[2] Warburton's Works, vol. xii. pp. 92, 185.
[3] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 53.

Digitized by Google

When the orthodox meaning imposed on the Essay had once been accepted by the poet, he was anxious to use the new interpretation to silence or conciliate his opponents abroad. He immediately got Warburton's reply to Crousaz translated into French,[1] and employed Ramsay, a Scotchman, who had been Fénelon's secretary, to write to Louis Racine, April 28, 1742, and assure him that he was mistaken when he said in his poem *La Religion*,

> Sans doute qu'à ces mots, des bords de la Tamise,
> Quelque abstrait raisonneur, qui ne se plaint de rien,
> Dans son flegme anglican répondra, "Tout est bien."

Ramsay told the French poet that Pope did not think all was "right" in mankind. He believed them fallen from their primitive condition, and his life-long faith was evidence of his real convictions. "He is a very good catholic," says his apologist, "and has always kept to the religion of his forefathers in a country where he had many temptations to abandon it." A letter addressed by Pope to Racine in the following September upholds the statement that he was a "good catholic," for he declares that his views are "conformable to those of Pascal and Fénelon, the latter of whom," says he, "I would most readily imitate in submitting all my opinions to the decision of the church."[2] His sincerity may be doubted when he professed his readiness to accept the decisions of the romish church for a law. The Essay on Man was already completed, or far advanced, when Bolingbroke wrote to him, "I do not expect from you the answer I should be sure to have from persons more orthodox than I know you to be in the faith of the pretended catholic church. Such persons would insist on the authority of the church."[3] Pope could not, indeed, be a romanist when he had not yet emerged from deism, and he was not a romanist some twelvemonth after his letter to Racine, when he said to Warburton, "that he was convinced that the church of Rome had all the marks of the anti-christian power predicted in the New Testament." Warburton enquired why he did not publicly renounce a church he allowed to be corrupt. "There were," he

[1] Pope to Warburton, Sept. 20, 1739; Jan. 4, 1740.

[2] Œuvres de Louis Racine, ed. 1808, tom. i. p. 444. "If," said Voltaire, "Pope wrote this letter to Racine, God must have given him at the close of his life the gift of tongues." Voltaire repeats three times over in his works, that he associated with Pope for a twelvemonth, and knew, what was publicly notorious in England, that he could hardly read French, and could not speak one word or write one line of the language. The objection was founded on the mistaken assumption that the French translation was the original letter. In the later editions of Racine's poem the letter is printed from Pope's English. Voltaire was annoyed that Pope should "retract" his deism, and wanted to have it believed that Ramsay alone was responsible for the sentiments expressed in the letter to Racine.

[3] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 457.

Digitized by Google

replied, "but two reasons that kept him from it: one, that the doing so would make him a great many enemies, and the other that it would do nobody else any good."[1] Either his persuasion that an unconditional submission was due to the decisions of the romish church, must have been a transitory belief which commenced a short time before his letter to Racine, and ceased a short time after, or else he used deceptive language in his letter that he might convince Racine of his orthodoxy. His explanations did not alter the French poet's opinion on the infidel tendency of the Essay on Man. "After the letter he wrote me," says Racine, "I am far from suspecting him of designing to preach deism, but I am obliged to confess that we seem to detect it in the midst of all his abstract reasonings, and that it even presents itself so naturally that we may attribute to it the rapid spread of the poem in France."[2]

Pope's letter was forwarded to Racine by Ramsay, who accompanied it with a second letter of his own, in which he again dwelt on his friend's continuous and disinterested adherence to romanism. "I am assured that a princess who admired his works, wished, when she ruled over England, to induce him not to abandon, but to dissimulate his religion. She was desirous of procuring him considerable appointments, and promised that the customary oaths should be dispensed with. He refused these offers with immoveable firmness. Such a sacrifice was not the act of a sceptic or a deist."[3] Ramsay does not say that he received the anecdote from Pope, but he was writing in concert with him, and on his behalf, and there is a strong presumption that the poet had sanctioned the fable. To dispense with the customary oaths would have been a breach of the act of settlement, and the assertion of the power would have cost Anne her crown, and Pope his office. This immense and abortive sacrifice was to have been made in the interests of a man whom the queen had never seen, who was politically insignificant, and whose moderate wants she could have supplied from her private purse. The ludicrous invention, which could only pass current with a foreigner ignorant of the English constitution, was a magnified version of Lord Oxford's hollow talk. "He used often," said Pope, "to express his concern for my continuing incapable of a place, which I could not make myself capable of without giving a great deal of pain to my parents, such pain, indeed, as I would not have given to either of them for all the places he could have bestowed upon me."[4] Lord Oxford, who trusted chiefly to duplicity and petty artifices for obtaining support, was accustomed to amuse every one who came near him with hopes, and evade their fulfilment by paltry excuses. His

[1] Ruffhead, Life of Pope, p. 542. Spence, p. 277.
[2] Œuvres de Louis Racine, tom. i. p. 451.
[3] Œuvres de Louis Racine, tom. i. p. 442.
[4] Spence, p. 231.

Digitized by Google

cheap lamentation that Pope was disqualified for an office is a sad downfall from the magnanimous offer of the Queen to provide him with a place in defiance of law, and at the risk of her throne. If the anecdote had been true, Ramsay's inference that Pope was an orthodox romanist would have been wrong. His reason for not "making himself capable of a place" was the pain his abjuration of romanism would have given his parents. He did not pretend to plead conscience.

The system of philosophy set forth in the poem is now to be considered. Few persons could have been less qualified than Bolingbroke and Pope to write on natural religion. The desultory superficial investigations of Bolingbroke were under the dominion of his passions, and Pope had barely thought upon the subject at all. They both took for their motto a sentence from Foster, a dissenting minister,—"Where mystery begins religion ends,"[1]—and it did not occur to them that no mystery could be greater than the first article of their own deistical creed,—the necessary existence of God. Atheism magnifies the mystery, which is an inherent ingredient in every system, religious or infidel. The least reflection forces this fact upon the mind, and the blindness of Pope and Bolingbroke to a truth which met them at the threshold of their speculations, and recurred at every turn, is not an unjust measure of their general incapacity for religious philosophy.

The Essay on Man was framed on the old and obvious division of ethics, which treated of man in his relation to God, his fellow-creatures, and himself. Pope, who thought it presumption to study God,[2] passed over the first of the three heads, and substituted an epistle on man in relation to the universe. The leading arguments in this opening epistle were taken from the Théodicée of Leibnitz, the Moralists of Shaftesbury, and the Origin of Evil, by Archbishop King. The poet had read the essay of Shaftesbury, and had possibly looked into King; but of Leibnitz he was entirely ignorant. In reply to the charge of having adopted the alleged fatalism of the illustrious German, he wrote to Warburton, Feb. 2, 1739, "It cannot be unpleasant to you to know that I never in my life read a line of Leibnitz, nor understood there was such a term as pre-established harmony till I found it in M. Crousaz's book." Bolingbroke had instructed Pope that Leibnitz was "one of the vainest and most chimerical men that ever got a name in philosophy, and that he was so often unintelligible that no man ought to believe he understood himself."[3] Naturally Pope had not the least suspicion that some of the principal tenets instilled into him by his "guide" were

[1] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 62.
[2] Epist. ii. ver. i.
[3] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 52.

Digitized by Google

filched without acknowledgment from this vain, chimerical, unintelligible man.

The optimism of Leibnitz has been a thousand times misrepresented, not because his Théodicée is obscure, but because the scoffers had never read the system they decried. He was supposed to have maintained that our little globe, taken separately, was the best which could be conceived, and that all the trials and crimes of men were in their own independent nature a good. Voltaire was among the ignorant, and to refute the doctrine that everything was good, he concocted a licentious tale, in which everything is vice, injustice, and misery. His satire has a double flaw. He gives a false representation of human life, and of the optimism of Leibnitz. The world of Leibnitz is not our earth in its present state, but the universe, unlimited in extent, and eternal in duration. The final purpose of the Deity in his stupendous scheme is the best that can be, and the means are the best for their end. The fitness of the several parts can only be estimated in their relation to the whole, and the whole is not creation at any moment of time, but the evolution of the universe from everlasting to everlasting. It would be folly to judge the evils of the hour in their isolation, when they are incidents in an illimitable plan, and have reference to the greatest ultimate good. To show in detail how all the evils we experience are subservient to the best conceivable scheme of the universe, would require that we should know the infinite design of God, that we should be able to picture the infinity of other possible worlds, and to institute a comparison between these infinite infinities. A morsel of flesh, or a splinter of bone, bears an immeasurably larger proportion to our frame than our existing globe to the existing universe, which is itself but a link in the eternal chain, and yet a person ignorant of the human structure would in vain attempt to explain the purpose and fitness of some diminutive fragment of man.[1]

Leibnitz took for granted, in their greatest latitude, the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Upon this supposition, Hume, personating the character of a sceptic, allowed that there "might, perhaps, be a plausible solution of the ill phenomena." But the sceptic objects that "the Deity is known to us solely in his productions, that the universe shows only a particular degree of wisdom and goodness, and that we can never be authorised to infer a further degree of these attributes, which would be adding something to the attributes of the cause beyond what appears in the effects."[2] The objection would be sound if the whole series of effects were unfolded to our view. They extend, on the contrary, indefinitely beyond our capacity to follow them, and the question is, whether

[1] Leibnitz, Opera Philosophica, ed. Erdmann, pp. 506, 544.
[2] Hume's Essays, ed. 1809, vol. ii. pp. 146, 147, 152.

Digitized by Google

the defects appertain to the attributes of God, or whether the appearance of imperfection is the consequence of our ignorance. The answer is not doubtful. There is superabundant proof that our globe is framed upon a plan in which animals and things have a mutual dependence. Our globe itself, again, is a portion of a larger system, and we have an irresistible conviction that the boundless universe is the work of one Author, and that a definite purpose pervades the whole. With this first fact we couple a second, that the appropriateness of the details in a complicated contrivance cannot be understood, unless we comprehend the general principle of the contrivance, and the relation of its parts. The optimism of Leibnitz is the only just inference from these facts. A speck of creation is submitted to our examination, and the evidences of power, wisdom, and goodness are vast and overwhelming. Other parts seem defective, as inevitably happens when our knowledge is miserably inadequate; and, in accordance with experience, we conclude that our enormous ignorance is at fault, and not that the superlative workman is inconsistent. The explanation of the optimist is rational, while that of the sceptic involves a gratuitous contradiction, and is wild, improbable, and unsupported.

Hume's spokesman enforces his view by an instance which was the favourite argument of Bolingbroke. "A more impartial distribution of rewards and punishments," says the sceptic, in allusion to a future state, "must proceed from a greater regard to justice and equity."[1] Admit that the justice of God's government on earth is, in a single instance, imperfect, and it follows that the argument for the perfection of His attributes is at an end. The fallacy is in the assumed fact, that a greater regard would be shown to equity, if rewards in this life were exactly proportioned to merits. The chief purpose of the present life is clearly not happiness but excellence. The characters of good men are disciplined and purified here to fit them for happiness hereafter, and the trials which best prepare them for eternal felicity cannot be a deviation from equity. "Every branch," says our Lord, "that beareth fruit, my father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit,"[2] which is a stronger evidence of fatherly care than an injurious distribution of rewards and punishments on the sceptical plan. Physical evils become a blessing when they are the lasting corrective of sin.

The moral evil itself can in part be explained. The mind and body of human beings, and the world in which we live, have been fixed for us by the Creator. The will alone is free, and it is the will which really constitutes the man. Without freedom of will there could be no morality, any more than a tree is moral when it

[1] Hume's Essays, vol. ii. p. 153.
[2] John, xv. 2.

Digitized by Google

flourishes, and immoral when it withers. Freedom pre-supposes a power to do wrong, and without this liberty there could be no individual worth. The frailty of man grows out of his supremacy. Warburton denied that there was any force in the explanation, since if "God had only brought those creatures into being who would not have abused their freedom, evil had been prevented without intrenching upon free will."[1] Two principles are here assumed to be indisputable, neither of which are self-evident, or capable of proof. Warburton supposes it to be intuitively certain that a picked race of moral agents, who must be limited in their perfections because they are inferior to God, may all be gifted with an infallible power of defying sin, which for aught we know may be impossible. A christian divine must admit that some of the angels fell, and for anything we can tell the steadfast angels might have sinned without the warning example of their apostate brethren. Warburton further supposes it to be intuitively certain, that if perchance there may be a hierarchy too lofty to have ever erred, the non-existence of the multitudinous lesser beings would be preferable to their existence with an admixture of evil, which is not the sentiment raised in human minds by the contemplation of the living creatures of our globe. On the contrary, the deepest philosophers and simplest peasants are alike lost in admiration at the spectacle, and feel impotent to rise to a fitting height of love and praise. As the latent premises of Warburton are not manifest facts, he has failed to make good his position, that to all appearance God could have framed a better world from which every semblance of evil might have been excluded. The moral nature of man goes far to account for the evil of man, and for his present probation. The comparative innocence of children is lovely, but it is innocence which has not been tried, and when it is tested it fails. The innocence of saints is the innocence which has passed through the terrible experience of sin, which knows the degradation of iniquity, which has fought against it and triumphed, and hence it is the second and acquired innocence which endures. The innocence of Adam in Paradise may have resembled the inexperience of the child, and the only road to permanent victory may be through defeat. Heaven itself may be a place of temptation unless an energy of conquering will has been first developed, and we have grown strong by an inherent homage to righteousness. In our world, at least, felicity is not the securest situation for untried virtue. This is enough to justify to our understandings the state of man upon earth, though much is mysterious in the details from our imperfect knowledge of the ultimate effect upon aggregate humanity of the discipline of life, and our ignorance of the part which our race is to play in the eternal universe.

[1] Phillimore's Life of Lord Lyttelton, vol. i. p. 304.

Digitized by Google

Leibnitz divided evil into moral evil or sin, physical evil or suffering, and metaphysical evil or the limitation of our endowments. He addressed men who were satisfied from the evidence of their internal nature and the external world that God was absolute in power, wisdom, and goodness. Hence, whatever is, is right. "We judge," says Leibnitz, "by the event; since God has so done it would not be possible to do better."[1] Pope starts from the premise of Leibnitz. He assumes the infinite wisdom of the Deity, and concludes that this wisdom must have formed the best possible system. But to a great extent he differed from Leibnitz with regard to the cause of the several kinds of evil, and his optimism was of an adulterate, untenable kind. He did not allow that moral evil was the pernicious abuse of a free will, with which we are endowed because men are preferable to automatons, moral agents to passive machines. He held that moral evil was in itself a good, and that God was the author of it. He it is who "pours fierce ambition into Cæsar's mind," and nature no more requires "men for ever temperate, calm, and wise," than "eternal springs and cloudless skies."[2] Since the sin of men is imposed upon them by God they must be machines after all, and of a debased and often devilish species. An inexorable fatalism becomes the law of humanity, and Borgias, Catilines, and Cæsars are destructive wheels which simply obey the motion impressed upon them by the omnipotent architect. God can do no wrong; man is the puppet of God; and whatever is, is consequently right, the villanies of miscreants included. The Essay swarms with contradictions, and in other passages Pope treats man as an accountable being who departs from the commands of his Maker.

Of physical evil, or suffering, Pope notices only "plagues, earthquakes, and tempests," which he justifies by the remark that God "acts not by partial, but by general laws."[3] Bolingbroke gave the same explanation. Either, he said, such visitations are "rational chastisements," or they are "the mere effects, natural though contingent, of matter and motion in a material system, put into motion under certain general laws."[4] Individuals, that is, must suffer that the laws of matter may not be infringed. Leibnitz rejected the principle. "That which is an evil," he said, "for me would not cease to be an evil because it would be good for some one else. The good which pervades the universe consists, among other things, in this, that the general good is the particular good of every one who loves the author of all good." So, he says again, "we suffer often from the misdeeds of others, but when we have no share in the crime

[1] Leibnitz, Opera, p. 628.
[2] Epist. i. ver. 159, 151–4.
[3] Epist. i. ver. 141—6.
[4] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 366.

Digitized by Google

we may hold it for certain that the sufferings procure us a greater happiness." [1] The system of Pope subordinates moral agents to physical, and he finds it a sufficient vindication that the mechanical law is general, and the injury to men only occasional. Whatever may be the worth of particular persons, he believes that they are properly sacrificed to the regularity of material laws, which roll on with undistinguishing, terrific might, crushing any thinking, sentient, virtuous being who may happen to cross their path. He supposes, nevertheless, that these unbending, undiscerning laws have undergone a "change," and, what is singular, the alteration has been from better to worse, whereby he accounts for a portion of the prevalent physical evil.[2] Another portion he at one time ascribed to "chance," which had intruded itself into the arrangements of the Almighty, and overruled his designs.[3] The optimism which represented man to be the sport of mechanical laws, of deteriorating changes in the physical system, and of blind, ungovernable chance, was not an optimism to clear away difficulties, and silence objections.

Metaphysical evil, or the limitation of endowments, is inevitable in every being below the Godhead, and Pope contends that the best system must manifestly consist in an infinite series of creatures, from the greatest to the least. The notion is found in Locke and Leibnitz. There are beings, said the latter, above and below us, or there would be a void in the order of species.[4] The idea was more fully developed by Archbishop King, and is simply an extension to the universe of the terrestrial system, where a gradation of beings on a connected plan is the law. Pope carried the principle to extravagance. He contends that the omission of the smallest creature would break the chain, would throw the universe into confusion, and involve all creation in a common ruin.[5] To keep the universe from tumbling to pieces, "it is plain," according to him, that "there must be somewhere such a rank as man,"[6] and the rule holds equally of the minutest animalcule on the globe. There is a flaw in his premises. It is not apparent that the extinction of the flea would upset the universe, nor that the scale of beings must necessarily be the same which at present prevails. The facts are against the "must be" of Pope. There was a time when other creatures were, and man was not, and when animated nature was able to dispense with the human race. Infinite wisdom must form the best possible system and a gradation of beings, which now includes man, is an actual part of the scheme. Pope's argument breaks down when, to justify

[1] Leibnitz, Opera, pp. 571, 577.
[2] Epist. i. ver. 147, iv. ver. 115.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 116, note.
[4] Leibnitz, Opera, pp. 312, 431, 507, 603.
[5] Epist. i. ver. 241—258.
[6] Epist. i. ver. 47-8.

Digitized by Google

the creation of man, he supposes that a chain of beings and an orderly universe could not have existed unless man had been a link in the series. His argument is equally weak when he maintains that the infinite wisdom of God is a guarantee that there will not be a gap in the endless chain of existences, but that it is a question whether infinite wisdom may not have made a mistake with respect to man's proper place in the series, and erred in the after sorting of the gradations which it had previously conceived and created on an infallible plan.[1] The poet was inconsistent to childishness. Johnson believed that when Pope talked of man's place he did not attach any meaning to the term. The words would seem to imply that it was a question whether man was placed in the circumstances which were best adapted to his moral, mental, and physical nature. But if Pope had thoroughly comprehended his borrowed phrases, he would not have proposed the enquiry under a form which stultified his premises.

There were errors enough in Pope's doctrine without the misinterpretations of Voltaire, who has falsified the views of the poet, as he had previously misstated the profounder system of Leibnitz. "Those," says Voltaire, "who exclaim that all is good are charlatans. Shaftesbury, who brought the fable into fashion, was a very unhappy man. I have seen Bolingbroke devoured with chagrin and rage, and Pope, whom he induced to put the mockery into verse, was as much to be pitied as any man I have ever known,—deformed in body, unequal in his temper, always ill, a burthen to himself, and harassed by a hundred enemies to his dying hour. Quote me at least some happy men who say that all is good. Any one who had seen the beautiful Ann Boleyn, and the still more beautiful Mary Stuart, in their youth, would have said that is good, but would he have said it when he saw them perish by the hand of the executioner? would he have said it when he saw the grandson of the beautiful Mary die the same death in the midst of his capital? would he have said it when he saw the great-grandson more unfortunate still, since he lived longer?"[2] Pope, in his imperfect theory, did not deny the existence of sorrow, but asserted, or implied, that the sorrow was an advantage either to the sufferer or others. Voltaire looked singly at the misery without heeding the gain. Mary Queen of Scots at the block was superior to the radiant beauty who was starting on a profligate career. Charles I., penitent for his murderous abandonment of Strafford, and, perhaps, for his creed that duplicity is a virtue when employed by kings to circumvent subjects, was a vastly better man on the scaffold than on the throne. James II. was in a more advantageous position with the inducement to repentance which his long exile supplied than if he had succeeded in his fraudu-

[1] Epist. i. ver. 43–50.

[2] Voltaire, Œuvres, tom. xlvii. p. 98.

Digitized by Google

lent attempts to subvert the English church and constitution. The rage of Bolingbroke, and Pope's fretful temper, were certainly inexplicable on the pretence that they were poured into the mind by the Deity. They did not militate against the truer optimism which saw in them self-imposed vice and pain, rendered possible by the free-will which is a privilege to mankind.

Pope filled up the outline of his system with declamatory invectives against objectors, and with reflections intended to prove that the imperfections of man befitted his position in the universe. There is little force in the poet's reasoning. He passes over difficulties, and replies to cavils which no one worth answering ever urged. Some of his remarks are obscure, some erroneous, some common-place. Such as they are they have not been woven into a consecutive argument. M. Crousaz says he knew persons who were persuaded that Pope had tacked together a number of fragments he had composed at different times, before he had the idea of an Essay on Man, which was a contrivance to work up his collection of odds and ends. He understood, in fact, little beyond the separate thoughts, and was insensible to the want of coherence, consistency and purpose. It would be lost labour to search, like Warburton, for a strength and closeness of reasoning which were not in the mind of the author.

The second epistle treats of man "with respect to himself as an individual." The Bible is a revelation of God, and a perpetual summons to mankind "to know and understand" him. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me."[1] The divinity at last descended upon earth, and lived our life, acting and speaking under our circumstances, that God might be clearly manifested to the world. "He that hath seen me," says our Lord, "hath seen the Father."[2] The divine light appeared darkness and imposture to Pope. He was even blind to the light which his natural understanding would have furnished, and, taught by Bolingbroke, he abjured all pretension to a knowledge of the Almighty under the plea of reverencing his inscrutable grandeur. Man must not venture to scan God; his only proper study is to learn to know himself.[3] This second epistle exhibits the kind of self-knowledge to which Pope attained, when, renouncing the knowledge of God, he determined to limit his investigations to man.

He draws a desolate picture. Man is in doubt whether he is a god or a beast; whether he ought to prefer his body or his mind. He is a confused chaos of thought and passion, he reasons only to err, and is only born to die.[4] The general incapacity, we are told,

[1] Jeremiah, ix. 23, 24.
[2] John, xiv. 9.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 1–2.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 3–18.

Digitized by Google

extended to Newton, and it might have occurred to the poet that it was a useless task to study our nature when the deductions of reason in its highest estate are uniformly wrong. He committed the oversight from his habit of borrowing fragments he was not at the pains to understand. His caricature was a partial and distorted copy from Pascal, who with wonderful energy of language, amplified the helplessness of fallen man that he might insist the more strongly on the necessity of his restoration through the Gospel. He overcharged the evil to exalt the remedy. Pope had not any remedy to suggest. He leaves the "confused chaos" in its primitive impotence, and calls upon mankind to embark in a deceptive study, with the warning that they will wander from error to error.

Without tying Pope down to the rhetorical exaggerations in the opening paragraph of his second epistle, we find from a passage in the first epistle that he reduced to insignificance the self-knowledge attainable by mankind. He said that when the proud horse and dull ox knew why man put them to this use or that, then would proud and dull man comprehend the end and use of his being, passions, sufferings, and actions.[1] The amount of knowledge possessed by the horse and ox is not discoverable by us. The only nature adequately known to man is his own, and his nature reveals his end. The ideas which ought to govern him proceed from his Maker. They are the voice of God speaking to him, and telling him the purpose for which he lives. He learns, above all, that he is the servant of the Almighty, that his passions are to be ruled by his conscience, that duty is supreme, that his sufferings are the discipline to perfect his character, that earth is the school for a higher existence. He may be negligent and perverse; he may refuse to look into his nature, and may, in part, defy it; may thence arrive at false conclusions, and adopt a false course of conduct, which are the abuses of a free-will that can sink or soar, but the grand outlines of his nature are plain to every honest and earnest enquirer, and blank ignorance on the end of his being, passions, sufferings, and actions is not the inevitable condition of man.

The conviction that we are ignorant of the use of our being and actions did not keep Pope from acknowledging that "good" is the end to which we aspire.[2] The nature of this good, and the means of obtaining it, is the main subject of the second epistle, "which contains," says Warburton, "the truest, clearest, shortest, and consequently the best system of ethics that is anywhere to be met with."[3] The system which Warburton thought "true and clear" appears to be eminently false and contradictory.

Man has certain implanted tendencies, physical, intellectual, and

[1] Epist. i. 61–8.
[2] Epist. ii. ver. 53–8.
[3] Warburton's Commentary, Epist. ii. ver. 53.

Digitized by Google

sympathetic,—the craving for food, for knowledge, for society, etc. None of our primitive endowments can be termed moral, since they are bestowed upon us independently of our will, and it is not till will interposes that morality begins, but in their purity they are all advantageous, and many of them are directed to the identical end which morality prescribes. They are part of the stock-in-trade with which man starts in his career, and he is charged with the wise administration of them. A brief experience teaches him that an instinctive tendency may be carried to excess. His craving for food and drink may turn to gluttony and drunkenness; his passion for knowledge may convert him into a solitary student without any care for his kind; his love of society and affection may unfit him for the business and drudgery of life. Or he may yield to a propensity till satiety succeeds, and he is left listless and jaded. Or he may indulge a lawful propensity by lawless methods. Or he may be hurried away by successive impulses, and be too unstable to put his gifts to a profitable use. In any of these ways his proper nature becomes mutilated and degraded. His reason informs him that to enjoy the full advantage of his tendencies he must not consent to be drifted along by the current which is strongest for the moment. He must curb the lower propensities, and foster the higher; he must regulate the several unities in a manner to derive the greatest benefit from the whole; he must substitute for the reign of impulse what moralists call his interest well understood. He does not stop at self-interest. He rises above his personal good into the impersonal sphere of good in itself. He perceives that there is a law superior to his individual interests, a law of universal obligation, and which is immutable and eternal.

Of these three motives, the instinctive, the prudential, and the law of independent morality, Pope rejects the last. He believes that self is the single spring of action in men, and he seriously adopts the old sarcastic saying, "Every man for himself, and God for us all."[1] He divides this selfish nature into two parts,—self-love, which designates the impulsive propensities, and reason, which governs them on the behalf of interest well-understood.[2] Already there is an inconsistency in his phraseology when he puts self-love in direct opposition to reason. Reason in his theory is simply the selfishness of calculation; self-love the selfishness of impulse. Self-love is absolute in both, and is not the less self-love because we deliberate upon the means which are best adapted to secure the selfish end.

The erroneous phraseology signifies little. The important point is the radical falsity of the system. The three grand duties of man,—his duty to God, his neighbour, and himself,—are resolved by Pope

[1] Epist. ii. ver. 235-8.

[2] Epist. ii. ver 53.

Digitized by Google

into the single duty of man to himself. In the first epistle the poet rebuked the pride which supposed the heavens and the earth to be created for its use.[1] In his second epistle he teaches us that they are totally indifferent to us under any other aspect. He will tell us that the way to promote our personal interest is to love God and our neighbour, but the end and motive of the love must on his system be our individual interest still. The gospel precepts must be set aside; for in place of loving our neighbour equally with ourselves we are to love him simply for the sake of ourselves; and in place of loving God with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, we are to love him solely as a tributary who ministers to our absorbing love of self. When we practically think and act as though we were the centre of the universe; when, horrible to say, we view the Deity merely as an instrument to promote our selfishness; when we discover nothing in the Creator to adore, nothing in his creation to admire, apart from their fitness to advance the interests of one puny mortal, we invert the actual constitution of things, we base our morality upon a lie, and we only cheat ourselves with delusive terms when we talk of our duty to God and our neighbour.

The test of the system is in the phenomena of consciousness which are open to universal observation. When our moral principle is an unalloyed selfishness we seek our private good alone, and there can be no obligation to consult the interests of our neighbours. I pay a debt because it is to my advantage, and not from any sense of what is due to my debtor. I forbear to kill, and maim, and torture, not in the least because I am bound to consider the rights and feelings of my fellow-creatures, but because it would be present or future pain to myself. Owning no law, except the law of selfishness, I should be dishonest and cruel if I could believe that the balance of personal pleasure was on the side of inhumanity and roguery. When I blame murderers and thieves, I inconsiderately distinguish between the guilt and folly of the crime, which is a vulgar mistake. The selfishness which respects nothing beyond the requirements of self is the law of our race, and the miscalled criminal has obeyed the governing principle of mankind. He owed no duty to others, and his sole fault was not to have judged wisely for his interests. I talk of patriotism and public spirit, of sacrifice and disinterestedness, but they are words which convey a false impression. Sacrifice and disinterestedness do not exist, and the apparent devotion to country and public is at bottom a complete devotion to self.

Common experience is too powerful for bad philosophy, and it is plain that this is not a true description of the moral man. Pope puts a part for the whole. The Creator has endowed us with a desire for happiness, which is inseparable from our being. The

[1] Epist. i. ver. 131.

Digitized by Google

individual is a portion of the universe, and though he is only an atom, his interests are cared for in common with the rest. But he has a consciousness that the good of others must be cared for likewise, that Providence has enjoined him to contribute to the result, and that his refusal to recognise the duty he owes to his neighbour would be guilt. He has a conviction that the great source of all being and all good is to be adored for his infinite perfections, and that to love him solely for the sake of the blessings he communicates to ourselves is a maimed, derogatory, and impious idea. Man has been constructed to perceive things as they are, and to act in conformity with his knowledge. He is the creature of his Maker, a unit in a multitude, and could not be permitted to consider Maker and multitude subordinate to the creature and unit, without a complete perversion of the facts. With the desire for our own good there has been instilled into us that law of good in itself which embraces the universe,—a law which, while it includes our individual concerns, extends infinitely beyond them, and to which we do homage under its aspect of good in itself, as well as under its aspect that it is good for me. Our personal pleasure is not therefore, as Pope asserts, "the whole employ of body and mind."[1] Happiness in the long run is dependent upon well-doing, and we consult our interest when we adhere to duty. But our rule of duty must not be bounded by our self-interest, which, reducing our motives to a petty egotism, corrupts the nature of man, and contaminates duty at its source.

The prevalent habit of abandoning duty for personal pleasure begets the mistaken idea that where there is pleasure there is absolute selfishness. The degree of selfishness must be determined by our motives, and not by the feelings which accompany our acts. Whatever is done for self-gratification is selfish; and everything in which our end is external to ourselves is disinterested, in so far as the accompanying gratification is not the motive to the deed. Although the benevolent man has a satisfaction in reflecting that the sufferings of the needy are removed, his predominant motive to benevolence is the relief of the wretched, and not his own personal pleasure. His intention terminates in the objects of his charity, with little return upon himself, and unless his sympathy with them was real the gratification would not be felt. Happiness is the proper effect of pure goodness, and if the junction of perfect happiness and perfect goodness was incompatible with disinterestedness, the celestial spirits would be more selfish than men. Men, in turn, would grow selfish in the same proportion that perseverance in well-doing rendered duty delightful. "I find a pleasure in serving my friends," said Schiller in refutation of the doctrine; "it is agreeable to me to

[1] Epist. ii. ver. 126.

Digitized by Google

fulfil my duties. This troubles me, for then I am no longer virtuous."[1] The love which is capable of the utmost sacrifice is not less generous because no sacrifice may chance to be required, any more than a man who is proof against all temptations to steal, is less honest because he is not exposed to temptation. From our proneness to self-deceit we are accustomed to estimate disinterestedness by actual sacrifices, which both test our motives, and inure us to self-denying love, but disinterestedness is the cause of self-denial and must precede it, and the disposition remains when the call for self-denial may have ceased. Qualities are what they are, whatever may happen to be the surrounding circumstances. Grant that a man can love his neighbour and himself with an equal love, and the same proportion will be preserved whether his love procures him unadulterated pleasure, or entails on him a vast amount of pain. Happiness and disinterestedness are not in their essence mutually destructive; they co-exist and coalesce.

A close scrutiny into the motives of moral men will satisfy us that the love of our neighbour is not wholly or chiefly a disguised love of self; that we love God for what he is, transcendent in goodness and wisdom, as well as for what he is to us; that we do not bow down to duty solely because it is our interest well understood, but much more because it has an illimitable authority independent of our individual interests, and binds the conscience by its right to supreme dominion. God, man, duty are external objects which, over and above the consideration of self-interest, are served by morality as an end. Bishop Butler even maintained that all our instinctive impulses "are particular movements towards particular external objects," and cannot be ascribed to self-love. He instances the desire produced by hunger, of which "the object and end," he says, "is merely food."[2] But there is a further object for which alone the food is desired,—the removal of painful sensations, or the gratification of the palate, or the prolongation of life. All these objects are often purely selfish, and always in their ordinary unreflecting state.[3] The uneasy sensation of hunger begins and ends with the individual; the single purpose for which he covets the food is to allay his particular physical craving; outside self there is no object left to attract the mind,—no over-plus to which our thoughts can be directed. There is not, as in the case of God, man, and law, an object which has a claim upon our hearts and understandings distinct from the special benefit to ourselves. The desire

[1] Madame de Staël, De l'Allemagne, Part iii., Chap. 16.

[2] Butler's Sermons, Oxford, 1835, pp. xx., 8, 161.

[3] A man may eat from principle, which often happens with the sick when they are wishing to die, and appetite is extinct. For the same reason they may eat delicacies when the stomach rebels against common fare. This was the case with Pascal in his illness, and, from a mistaken asceticism, he endeavoured to swallow the choice food without tasting it.

Digitized by Google

for food is a selfish, but not an evil instinct, for self-love is part of the duty and constitution of man. Pope's error was in putting a fragment for the whole, and merging duty in selfishness.

There is a second part to Pope's system. He has told us that the function of reason is to "advise and check" the instinctive impulses; that she "mixes the passions with art, and confines them to due bounds;" that she "compounds and subjects, tempers and employs them;" and that her "well-accorded" combination of jarring elements "gives all the strength and colour to our life."[1] The instant after he lays down a directly opposite theory. He says that every man brings into the world a "ruling passion," which is "cast and mingled with his very frame;" that this master passion "grows with our growth," and "swallows up" all the other passions; that whatever "warms the heart or fills the head" goes to feed the one despotic desire. When we fancy we curb a passion we are deceived; we have only resigned a lesser passion in favour of a greater.[2] Reason, which lately mixed the passions in their proper proportions, and confined them to due bounds, is suddenly stripped of her prerogative, and becomes the slave of the master passion.

> The ruling passion, be it what it will,
> The ruling passion conquers reason still.

Reason in this new theory is worse than helpless; she deserts to the side of her enemy, gives the monster propensity "edge and power," and exerts herself to exasperate the "mind's disease."[3] Such contradictions were the natural consequence of the perfunctory manner in which Pope had picked up his scraps of philosophy.

The slightest acquaintance with the world is fatal to the hypothesis that an exclusive ruling passion is the universal characteristic of mankind. Each person has various appetites, desires, and affections, and it is rare to see a man in whom "one master passion has swallowed up the rest." Propensities intermingle and take their turn. Characters are notoriously complex, and every individual is not the incarnation of a single unattended passion. A desire for power may be joined with sensuality, a love of fame with covetousness, an eagerness for knowledge with affection. In the play of passions one may preponderate, but all the rest are not reduced to nullity. Allow the existence of the ruling passion, and Pope's account of its origin could not be correct. A passion which is cast in our frame from our birth, and continues thenceforward to grow with our growth, must be permanent and unalterable. The individual must be governed by the same passion in childhood and age, in the season of thoughtlessness and of wisdom, in dissoluteness and virtue, in all the possible changes of condition. This is not the

[1] Epist. ii. ver. 70, 113, 116, 119–22. [2] Epist. ii. ver. 131–148, 157.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 133, 147.

Digitized by Google

scene which life presents. "Every observer," says Johnson, "has remarked, that in many men the love of pleasure is the ruling passion of their youth, and the love of money that of their advanced years."[1]

With an inherited ruling passion, and reason helpless to restrain it, we should be altogether the creatures of fate on Pope's hypothesis, if he had not furnished reason with a last resource, which, as is evident from several parallel passages, was chiefly suggested to him by the works of his contemporary, Mandeville. This shallow thinker put forth a system of morality and political economy in his Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits. The book, which was philosophically weak, attracted much notice at the time from the liveliness of his coarse illustrations, the vigorous ease of his inaccurate style, and the cynical parade of his licentious doctrines. He had the folly to imagine that commerce could only flourish when the wealth of a nation was consumed by the idle, the sensual, the luxurious. Hence, he argued that their wasteful vices were a national gain. This was his political economy. His morality consisted in denying the reality of virtue. He held that every apparent virtue was prompted by an underlying frailty, and that all ostensible goodness was the false mask worn over inward weaknesses. The indignation his system provoked induced him subsequently to throw in some qualifying phrases, but his faint, and always equivocal concessions, are forms of speech, and did not prevent his repeated avowal that genuine virtue had no existence on earth. "I often," he says, "compare the virtues of good men to your large China jars; they make a fine show, but look into a thousand of them, and you will find nothing in them but dust and cobwebs."[2]

Pope, like Mandeville, founds virtue upon vice. The ruling passion is evil, but reason gives it a bias towards good.[3] "Spleen, obstinacy, hate, and fear," each produce "crops of wit and honesty;" "anger" is the parent of "zeal and fortitude;" "avarice" of "prudence;" "sloth" of "philosophy;" and every virtue under heaven may issue from "pride or shame."[4] The ruling passion having engulphed the whole family of affections and desires, this individual is a personification of anger, that individual of hate; a third of fear; a fourth of sloth; a fifth of pride. The sole moving principle of man is his giant passion.[5] The function of reason is only to foster it,[6] and select the means for its gratification. Whatever these means may be, the motive of the incarnate monster lust,

[1] Crousaz's Commentary on Pope's Essay, translated by Johnson, p. 109.
[2] Fable of the Bees, ninth edition, vol. i. p. 137.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 175, 197.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 185–194.
[5] Epist. ii. ver. 59, 67.
[6] Epist. ii. ver. 147.

Digitized by Google

is to feed sensuality; of the monster sloth to secure ease; of the monster pride to inflate self-importance. "The same ambition," says Pope, "may make a patriot, as it makes a knave."[1] But the incarnation of an all-pervading ambition can be only a patriot in appearance, and uses patriotism to serve the ends of ambition. Let the two diverge, and by the law of his nature he must fling the patriotism to the winds. "Either," says our Lord, "make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else, make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt."[2] On Pope's theory, to make the tree good is impossible. Man has no escape from the ruling passion he brings into the world. He must be angry, avaricious, or slothful, according to the seed which was sown in him at his birth, and the tree must remain corrupt to the last.

The fruit would inevitably betray the taint of its origin, and Pope was mistaken in supposing that a vitiated motive could keep steady to outward virtue. "Hate," to which Pope ascribes the singular power of producing "crops of wit and honesty," must repudiate love, or whatever else did not subserve the one unamiable passion; and a man all hate,—a frantic enemy to every kind and tender emotion,—would be hateful, however honest and witty. "Anger" would renounce the meek and charitable, "pride" the humble virtues, together with any other virtue which did not minister to inordinate anger and pride. Neither passion would assume a moral aspect. "I observe," says Baxter, "that almost all men, good and bad, do loathe the proud, and love the humble." "Zeal" is the prerogative ascribed to "anger," and the zealot who was urged on by fierce unflagging anger would be a terror and a scourge. Pope himself has drawn a horrible picture of the miseries inflicted upon humanity when "zeal, not charity, became the guide" of the teachers of religion.[3] "Sloth" supplies us with "philosophy," or the apathetic submission to evils we are too lazy to correct, which is the virtue that induces thousands to live in dirt and ignorance, because cleanliness and knowledge are not to be had without industry. "Avarice" is credited with the faculty of "supplying prudence," which is as true as to say that a burning fever supplies a moderate, healthy temperature. The moral system which confines man to the counterfeit "virtue nearest allied to his vice," or ruling passion, is an extravagant libel upon the virtuous, and outrageous flattery of the vicious.[4]

Mandeville took his morality from La Rochefoucauld, and Pope took hints from both. The principle common to the three is the motto which La Rochefoucauld placed at the head of his Maxims, "Our virtues are usually vices in disguise." The doctrine, when expressed in La Rochefoucauld's language, was condemned by Pope.

[1] Epist. ii. ver. 201.
[2] Matthew, xii. 33.
[3] Epist. iii. ver. 261.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 185—194, 196.

Digitized by Google

"As L'Esprit," he said, "La Rochefoucauld, and that sort of people, prove that all virtues are disguised vices, I would engage to prove all vices to be disguised virtues. Neither, indeed, is true: but this would be a more agreeable subject; and would overturn their whole scheme."[1] He repeated the criticism in a suppressed passage of the Essay on Man,[2] with a complete unconsciousness that the "scheme" he fancied he could "overturn," was the very soul of his system. "Heaven," he said, "can raise virtue's ends from the vanity which seeks no reward but praise,"[3] and for man to be virtuous solely out of vanity was exactly the virtue which La Rochefoucauld called "vice in disguise." He who feeds the hungry from vanity alone is not moved by sympathy for suffering. Charity is merely the pretence which his vanity pleads. Each of the other ruling passions acts according to its own exclusive nature, and the virtue which is adopted to humour anger, hate, sloth, and avarice, is by general consent called delusion or imposture. La Rochefoucauld has the advantage over Pope. The succession of selfish passions he discovered too uniformly in man is less odious than the concentrated anger, hate, or sloth which never pauses or turns aside; and the satirist who lashes the deceptive vices of mankind is to be preferred to the moralist who teaches that vice in disguise is virtue.

The contradictions are not at an end. Pride, folly, "even mean self-love," have all, says Pope, some good in them.[4] He forgot that self-love is, with him, the principle of every virtue and vice, their essence and life, their origin and end, and to call self-love meaner than pride and folly is either to assert that self-love is meaner than itself, or to abandon the foundation of his moral systems. He goes on to ascribe an influence to self-love which is incompatible with his second system, or theory of the ruling passion. "Self-love," he says, "is the scale to measure others' wants by thine," or, as he remarked to Spence, "self-love would be a necessary principle in every one, if it were only to serve each as a scale for his love to his neighbour."[5] On Pope's second system this love of each for his neighbour must be extinct, unless love chanced to be the ruling passion. Unmixed anger, hate, and sloth retain no trace of affection. When we are reduced to a single passion, and for selfish purposes "measure others' wants by our own," anger can but have an intellectual, unsympathising perception of rival passions, and will only assist them in the degree which will serve its irritable instincts. Sloth, anger, hate, and the rest will act according to their kind, and to call upon them to love their neighbours as themselves is to enjoin the deaf to hear, and the blind to see.

[1] Spence, p. 9.
[2] Epist. ii. ver. 216, note.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 245.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 285–292.
[5] Epist. ii. ver. 291. Spence, p. 109.

Digitized by Google

An evil fatalism, therefore, remains the leading principle of Pope's second system. A man must be avaricious, slothful, or angry as nature appoints. He cannot select his passion, or divert, or repress it. The sole power reserved to his will is a certain latitude in choosing the diet upon which the passion feeds. This meagre and polluted freedom dwindles to nothing with such passions as sloth and avarice, and if there was room for prayer, when our nature is fixed for us by an irreversible decree, we ought to petition for the "pride and vainglory" against which we pray in the Litany, since, if Pope is right, they permit more variety of specious virtue than the griping prudence of avarice, and the corrupting philosophy of sloth.

The poet passes from his review of individual man to the designs of God, and his degenerate morality sinks lower as he proceeds. "The ends of Providence," he says, "and general good are answered in our passions and imperfections," and he goes on to show "how usefully" the Deity, acting in the interests of the "whole,"[1] has "distributed" imperfections to "orders of men, to individuals, and to every state and age of life."[2] Pope refuses to ascribe our evil passions to the abuse of that freedom of will which is inseparable from the idea of a moral being. He retains the doctrine laid down in his first epistle, and involved in his ruling-passion hypothesis, that our evil passions are the immediate gift of God. "Heaven applies" what Pope calls "happy frailties to all ranks,—fear to statesmen, rashness to commanders, and presumption to kings."[3] "Pride is bestowed on all, a common friend,"[4] which overthrows his theory that the ruling is our only passion, and pride incompatible with avarice, sloth, &c. The blessing he imputes to pride is that it takes possession of the "vacuities of sense," and prevents self-knowledge.[5] "The proper study of mankind is man," but the desirable effect of the study is that man should be self-deceived,—that he should be soothed into complacency by ignorance of his individual defects, and by a conceited dream of imaginary excellence. The "bubble joy" is ordained by Providence "to laugh in the cup of folly," that folly may be cheered in its career, and fast as "one prospect is lost" may be lured on by "another."[6] The poet had already furnished an illustration of his doctrine, in the consolatory fact that "the sot" fancies himself "a hero!"[7] "Pleasure," says Pope, is "our greatest evil or our greatest good," and these were among his good pleasures,—the contrivances of a beneficent Deity for the comfort and encouragement of vice and folly. Bolingbroke was better informed. "The man," he says, "who neglects the duties of natural religion, and the obligations of morality, acts against his nature, and

[1] Epist. ii. ver. 238.
[2] Argument of Epist. ii.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 241–4.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 272.
[5] Epist. ii. ver. 286–7.
[6] Epist. ii. ver. 288.
[7] Epist. ii. ver. 268.

Digitized by Google

lives in open defiance to the author of it. God declares for one order of things, he for another. God blends together the duty and interest of his creature; his creature separates them, despises the duty, and proposes to himself another interest." [1]

Pope is not satisfied with applauding moral imperfections. He degrades and ridicules religious aspirations. Every period, he says, of life is provided with "some fit passion," [2] and as a "rattle, by nature's kindly law," is the "plaything" of the "child," so "beads and prayer-books are the toys of age." The new toy, like the old, is but a "bauble," which "pleases," as the rattle had done before, till "tired" of the game we "sleep, and life's poor play is over." [3] The whole is an idle entertainment arranged by the Deity, who has "usefully distributed" the "fit" and frivolous passions which amuse our hollow existence. The worst writer has never given a more debased description of the moral government of God, and of the nature and ends of rational man. Ignorant of our Creator, presumptuous when we dare to study him, involved in a whirl of endless error when we study ourselves, the victims of a pre-ordained and irresistible passion, prayer is but a beguiling "toy," and not the reasonable, elevated language of belief, trust, and repentance. The goal of morality is the discovery that "life is a poor play," a paltry mimic scene, which leaves us only this barren consolation—that though we, the actors, are "fools," "God," who has cast our empty part for us, "is wise." [4] The wisdom is not apparent in Pope's deplorable travestie of man's moral nature. Happily, true morality teaches that life is a grand school in which, knowing the adorable perfections of God, we learn to imitate his goodness. The moral man is occupied with noble realities, and not with mimic shows. He fights against destroying passions, struggles to conform to immutable verities, and finds, amid many bitter failures, that human weakness and littleness can continuously approximate to the divine exemplar. The life, which seemed to Pope a "poor play," is to the moral and religious man a mighty privilege, an awful responsibility, a sublime preparation,—the prelude to a holy and happy eternity.

The third epistle treats "of the nature and state of man with respect to society." The details of our duty to our neighbour were kept for the portion of the Essay which was never written. In the present epistle Pope discusses the general relation of man to man, or the foundation of society and government. A third of his dissertation is a renewal of the argument in the previous epistles that all things have a mutual dependence, that every creature is made both

[1] Bolingbroke, Works, vol. iv. p. 154.
[2] Epist. ii. ver. 273.
[3] Epist. ii. ver. 275–282.
[4] Epist ii. ver. 293–4.

Digitized by Google

for others and for itself. This desultory introduction is succeeded by the remark that "self-love and social love began with the state of nature,"[1] which is an allusion to the argument of Hobbes, much canvassed in Pope's day, that "the state of nature was a state of war." Pope and Hobbes agreed that human motives were entirely selfish. They differed in their opinion of the direction which the selfishness took. Hobbes contended that each would desire all things for himself, and would endeavour to despoil his neighbour; Pope, that self-love would seek its gratification in social love. But the poet says and unsays, and is soon involved in a labyrinth of inconsistencies. He tells us that in the patriarchal period, "before the name of king was known,"[2] "man, like his Maker, saw that all was right;" "trod to virtue in the paths of pleasure;" and recognised no "allegiance" or "policy" except "love."[3] A few lines earlier he asserted that in the same patriarchal period, before monarchy was known, and when all was love and virtue, some states were compelled to join others through "fear;" and "foes," tempted by trees laden with fruit, went forth "to ravish" the orchards of their neighbours. And when the robbers desisted from their intended spoliation, it was not out of love or compassion, but only because they were persuaded by the proprietors that "commerce" would prove as profitable as "war."[4]

Both these clashing theories are espoused by Pope with equal confidence, but the greatest prominence is given to the theory that social love was perfect in the patriarchal times. The whole of the sentient world was included in the happy brotherhood. The human race were the companions of the beasts, and walked, fed, and slept with them. The disastrous circumstance which broke up the reign of universal love was the craving of man for animal food. He yielded to the temptation to eat flesh, and from a meek, was changed into a pugnacious, sanguinary creature. The inflammatory diet generated the "fury passions," till then unknown, and "turned man on man."[5] "Force" was now employed to make "conquests," and war and rapine were introduced.[6] Pope once more lapses into his habitual contradictions. He represents the patriarchs as teaching their families to "draw monsters from the abyss," and "fetch the eagle to the ground" during the innocent era when the lives of beasts were held sacred.[7] He has thus adopted two opposite versions of the patriarchal treatment of the animal creation, and the later version, which teaches that the slaughter of animals was prevalent under the reign of love and virtue, is inconsistent with his

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 149.
[2] Epist. iii. ver. 209.
[3] Epist. iii. ver. 232–40.
[4] Epist. iii. ver. 201–6.
[5] Epist. iii. ver. 149–168.
[6] Epist. iii. ver. 245.
[7] Epist. iii. ver. 221.

Digitized by Google

genealogy of the "fury passions." He has likewise two opposite opinions on the destruction of brutes,—the one, that to take their lives was murder; the other, that the art of killing them was among the laudable discoveries which entitled the patriarchs to be esteemed "a second Providence" by their children.[1] Pope has not done with his contradictions. "It might, perhaps," he says in his first epistle, "appear better for us that all were harmony and virtue, and that never passion discomposed the mind." "But all," he replies, "subsists by elemental strife, and passions are the elements of life," which he urges to show the necessity for the "fierce ambition" of Cæsar, and the misdeeds of Borgia and Catiline.[2] In the third epistle we are told that "the virtue and harmony" actually lasted for many generations, that the strife of bad passions was not in the slightest degree requisite for sustaining the system established on earth, and that the aggressive vices of Cæsars, Catilines, and Borgias were only the pernicious consequence of eating meat.

The hypothesis is puerile, that force, conquest, and rapine originated in a meat diet. Equally puerile is the theory that the arts of government, navigation, agriculture, and manufactures were copied from animals.[3] Man is specially distinguished by his inventive capacity. Through this gift the arts and sciences are continuously progressive, and there is no plausibility in the supposition that his characteristic power was originally in abeyance. The gratuitous fancy that the arts of human civilisation were acquired from the brutes, could not be supported by less appropriate examples. Mankind are said by Pope to have been pre-eminently social, and he would have us believe that neither sociality nor convenience could teach them to construct their dwellings in proximity, till "reason late" suggested to them the reflection, that some birds, such as rooks, built their nests in clusters.[4] He acknowledges that a community of families perceived it would be for their interest to have a single ruler; but the principle that the subjects under a monarchy should retain their right to their houses and property, was discovered by observing that every bee in a hive had its separate cell, and separate honey,[5] which was a fiction of some unobservant naturalist, who credited bees with our usages. From the silk-worm we learn to "weave," and from the mole to "plough," notwithstanding that the silk-worm only spins silk, and never weaves it, and that the subterranean scratchings of the mole have no resemblance to our contrivance, the plough. The remaining instances cited by Pope are just as absurd. He strung together fragments of ancient fables, which, in a modern copy, are neither poetry nor philosophy.

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 154, 217.
[2] Epist. i. ver. 165-170.
[3] Epist. iii. ver. 169-198.
[4] Epist. iii. ver. 179-182.
[5] Epist. iii. ver. 183-188, 210.

Digitized by Google

When families spread, patriarchal government is said by Pope to have been invariably merged in monarchical. He makes no mention of another elementary system which prevailed among the ancient Germans, and which was too natural to have been unfrequent. The tribe was composed of contiguous families, or clans, each of which had its separate territory. The head of every clan was ruler within his own domain, and the affairs which concerned the entire tribe were managed by a general assembly of the heads of clans. Under this arrangement the representative of the clan preserved his patriarchal power, and had an equal voice with his brother chiefs in regulating the common interests of the tribe. Pope completed his single genealogical principle of government by a rapid summary of the transitions through which monarchy passed. Conquest led to tyranny. An ambitious priesthood first threatened the despot with spiritual terrors, then went shares with him, and the double yoke of secular and ecclesiastical tyranny was fastened on the necks of mankind. The oppressed subjects at last rebelled against their rulers, kings were "forced into virtue by self-defence," and the world returned to the dominant principle of the state of nature, that "self-love and social are the same." These meagre doctrines were derived from Bolingbroke, whose political philosophy was hardly more profound than his moral and metaphysical; but Pope shows, here and there, that he had read Locke's treatise on Civil Government, and the passages from Hooker which Locke quoted, and with such masters to guide him the flimsiness of his views is without excuse.

The investigations of Pope conducted him to the final conclusion that "the true end of all government" is unity among mankind, and he prescribes the methods by which harmony is to be preserved both in politics and religion. The panacea which was to cure political divisions is contained in the couplet,

> For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best.[1]

Good government, that is, depends on good administration; the form of government is immaterial, and those who battle for one form in preference to another, are fools. The accusation of folly was thrown back upon the poet, who grew ashamed of his maxim, and in 1740 he gave an interpretation to his verses which they cannot be made to bear. "The author of these lines," he said, "was far from meaning that no one form of government is, in itself, better than another (as that mixed or limited monarchy, for example, is not preferable to absolute), but that no form of government, however excellent or preferable in itself, can be sufficient to make a people happy unless it be administered with integrity. On the contrary, the best

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 303.

Digitized by Google

sort of government, when the form of it is preserved, and the administration corrupt, is most dangerous." The concord which was to have been produced by indifference to forms of government, vanishes with the admission that the form is important. The qualifying remark, that forms are insufficient when their spirit is violated, was a truism denied by no one. A corrupt legislature, a corrupt executive, and corrupt tribunals, would neutralise the benefit of any constitution with which they could subsist.

Pope retracted his maxim under the pretence of explaining it. His new version showed that he did not yet understand the value of forms of government, or he would not have said that when the administration is corrupt the best form of government is the most detrimental to the public. A slight reflection on the History of England, and the nature of man, must have convinced him that a chief virtue of good forms of government is the security they afford for the prevention, limitation, and cure of corruption,—for the subordination of private selfishness to the common weal. His own epistle would have informed him that when governors have absolute dominion they "drive through just and unjust" to gratify their "ambition, lust, and lucre;" and when the power is with the governed, they will not suffer their rights to be extensively invaded, but will oblige kings and ministers to "learn justice."[1] There was a stage of feudalism when the territorial, legislative, and judicial functions were centered in the lord of the fief. He taxed and punished his serfs and vassals at pleasure. His covetousness, his cruelty, his passionate caprices, all developed by uncontrolled habit and the spirit of the age, could only be resisted by rebellion, and rebellions he quenched in blood. The sufferings of his people were atrocious. Pope lived under a vastly superior constitution, which he believed was corruptly administered, and the detriment to the public should have been greater, on his principle, than the despotism of feudal times. The fact was signally the other way. The mediæval enormities were no longer possible; person and property were safe, and loyal citizens lived in peace and security. Laws were not always just, religious and civil liberty was incomplete, purity in ministers and legislators was often defective. But there was a limit to corruption, or ministers and legislators would have been indignantly discarded. They were compelled in the main to consult the supposed interests of the country, that they might preserve the power to gratify their private aims. Many of the evils which existed kept their ground through remaining imperfections in the constitution. The popular element was too restricted, and the abuses were diminished when the form of government was improved.

Pope's receipt for putting an end to political rancour was that

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 269, 279.

Digitized by Google

the public should accept his assurance that only fools troubled their heads about forms of government. His remedy for religious discord was that the world should receive his dictum that only bad men could attach importance to religious beliefs:

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.[1]

Since no one, he says, can have a wrong faith whose life is in the right, all who fight for modes of faith must be graceless zealots. Two conclusions are involved in his principle,—the first, that religious belief and worship are not any necessary part of a life in the right; the second, that the mode of faith has not the faintest influence upon moral practice. Without stopping to consider the first point, we have only to glance at the history of christianity for a decisive refutation of the second. Thousands upon thousands of "graceless zealots" contended, at the cost of their lives, for a mode of faith which changed the face of the world. Pope must have argued that the effect would have been equal, nay, superior, if christian ethics had been divorced from christian theology. Apostles and martyrs, then martyrs no more, should have said to pagans, "Accept our moral precepts, and it matters not whether you believe that there is one god, or many gods, or no god. It does not signify whether you believe that the divine nature, and divine mission of Jesus Christ, was a truth or a pretence, his resurrection a fact or a fable. It does not even signify whether you believe that there is any resurrection at all, whether you are convinced that there is an everlasting reward for the righteous, or are persuaded that wicked and righteous will both be annihilated. These are only 'modes of faith' which do not affect morality, and we should be 'graceless zealots' to insist upon them." Pope produces an additional reason in support of his principle. "The world," he says, "will disagree in their religious hopes and faith, but charity is the concern of everybody. Everything which thwarts this charity must be false, and all things must be of God which bless or mend mankind."[2] Consequently, Pope's idea of charity was never to struggle for a doctrine which would provoke disagreement; and whoever roused opposition by warring against ignorance and error, proclaimed himself a false teacher by his very zeal to disseminate the truth. The christian who exposed polytheism could not be a minister of God, nor could any doctrine "bless and mend" heathens which did not leave their idolatrous superstitions undisturbed. The principle cannot be limited to religion. The world disagree in their conceptions of a "life in the right;" the charity which is "all mankind's concern," would be violated by

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 305.

[2] Epist. iii. ver. 307—310.

Digitized by Google

questioning the lax ideas which abound; and the moralists who "fight" for a pure system of ethics, must be classed, in turn, with "graceless zealots." The triumph of Pope's system would be the destruction of morality, religion, and charity; for religion and morality must be dead already when it is acknowledged that zeal for their purity and propagation is a sin, and the check of religion and morality being withdrawn, the charity which remained would be that of the savage and felon.

Pope set at nought his own maxims. In the name of charity he demanded that men should not contend for their faith, and he declined to exercise the charity he enjoined. Everyone with him was a "graceless zealot" who ventured to dissent from his private decree. This decree, which was to bind the rest of the world, was not to bind Bolingbroke and himself. They were both privileged to "fight for modes of faith." Bolingbroke, a scurrilous deist, whose writings are stuffed with frenzied invectives against the religious "faith and hope" of the vast majority of the English people, and who was the true type, in the worst sense, of a "graceless zealot," is lauded by Pope to the skies for his philosophic wisdom. Pope, on his own part, maintained in the Essay a controversial discussion on the origin of evil, and other mysterious topics, which most of the "zealots" he upbraided were content to leave undetermined. He laid down the law with dictatorial self-sufficiency, treated the difficulties of humbler inquirers with scorn, and denounced, in taunting, contumelious language, the impugners of the government of God. He offered no reason for excepting the deistical "mode of faith" from his law, unless we suppose him to have tacitly relied on his assertion that those who shared his deism were "slaves to no sect, took no private road, but looked through Nature up to Nature's God."[1] The plea avails nothing. All who are honest in their opinions believe that they hold the truth, and that they are not bigoted slaves to private delusions. Few men could urge the claim with less plausibility than Pope. His tenets discredited his pretensions. If he looked up to Nature's God, he, nevertheless, stigmatised those who presumed to study the God they adored. He believed that God infused wicked passions into men, that his physical laws were deteriorated by change, and overruled by chance.[2] He held that the same wicked passions which God poured into the human mind were originally generated by animal food; his theory of morals was licentious and contradictory; his opinions in general incoherent and irreconcileable. He had little cause to boast that he "took no private road" when there probably did not live a second person who would have subscribed to his creed.

The fourth epistle treats of Happiness, and was a supplement

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 331.

[2] Epist. iv. ver. 111—115.

Digitized by Google

imposed on the poet by Bolingbroke. The professed object was to refute the atheist, who maintained that the condition of mankind was not regulated by the rules of justice, and thence inferred that there could be no superintending Providence. The real intention of the "guide, philosopher, and friend" was to deprive divines of the argument for the immortality of the soul which they built upon the want of proportion between men's conduct and happiness. Pope was partly the dupe of Bolingbroke, and partly his accomplice. He may not have seen the full scope of his instructor's lessons, but he knew that they favoured annihilation, and, to please "the master of the poet and the song," the poet forbore to assert the opposite belief. His orthodox friends complained of the omission, and Pope was driven to deny that there was any connection between the purpose of his Essay and the doctrine of a future state. After mentioning to Spence that he had omitted the address to our Saviour by the advice of Berkeley, he added, "One of our priests, who are more narrow-minded than yours, made a less sensible objection to the epistle on Happiness. He was very angry that there was nothing said in it of our eternal happiness hereafter, though my subject was expressly to treat only of the state of man here."[1] He subsequently extended the remark to the entire poem. "Some wonder why I did not take in the fall of man in my Essay, and others how the immortality of the soul came to be omitted. The reason is plain: they both lay out of my subject, which was only to consider man as he is in his present state, not in his past or future."[2] When Pope told Spence that he could not discuss the fall of man in his Essay, because the "past state" of man was foreign to his subject, he had forgotten the contents of his third epistle, which treats of primitive man, the age of innocence, and the depravation of mankind through eating meat. When he said that a future state "lay out of his subject," he did not perceive the true bearings of his promise to "vindicate the ways of God to man,"[3] nor the force of his own admission that to pronounce upon the fitness of man's nature, to judge "the perfection or imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what relation it is placed in, and what is the proper end and purpose of its being."[4] This is the language of common sense. Man's condition on earth is adapted to his destiny, which can alone explain and justify his position in the world. The justice and goodness of the Deity wear a totally different aspect according as we discover evidence that life is a discipline for immortality, or a sorrowful transit to annihilation. The first epistle, again, is on the "nature and state of man with respect to the universe;" and in this relation of man to the universe, the one inquiry which gives importance to the rest, is

[1] Spence, p. 107.
[2] Spence, p. 206.
[3] Epist. i. ver. 16.
[4] The Design, *post*, p. 343.

Digitized by Google

whether we are to have a share in the eternal system of things, or whether, as the poet says of vegetables, we are mere "bubbles which rise from the sea of matter, break, and return to it."[1] The destiny of man was at the root of Pope's subject, and he could not have thought otherwise unless he had been bent upon accommodating his philosophy to the infidelity of Bolingbroke.

The weak attempt to use language which would fit both infidelity and belief, led to sorry conclusions. Pope allowed that it was God who instilled into man a hope of immortality, with the object of soothing him during his earthly career; but the poet was careful to employ expressions which implied that the hope might be a delusion.[2] He thus vindicated the ways of God by acknowledging that the Creator of the universe might be a deceiver. As the hope, which he confessed to be a promise engraved on the heart of man by the finger of God, might be false, the fears of future punishment imprinted on the conscience could not be more trustworthy. The christian who died, exulting, at the stake, in the flower of his age, a martyr to conscience, and the miscreant, who went terrified to execution, oppressed by the sense of his crimes, might both be mocked by the lying voice which spoke through the nature bestowed on them by their Maker. The poet could see no objection to the supposition that the Governor of the world might rule by promises he never intended to keep, and by threats he never intended to enforce.

The more we look into the nature which the Deity has conferred upon man, the more untenable Pope's alternative appears. All our best aims,—the efforts after holiness, love, knowledge, and rational happiness,—are a progressive work in which the mind is increasingly fitted for the enjoyment of its aspirations, without once attaining to a satisfactory realisation of its desires. Especially the Deity is hidden from our sight; and devout souls would be baulked of the primary purpose of their existence unless they were to behold him at last. The legitimate deduction is strengthened when we consider the afflictive methods by which we advance towards the appointed ends of our being. The toils of virtuous men, their pangs of body, their anguish of mind, their sacrifices to duty, their heroic martyrdoms, are irreconcileable with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity if total extinction is the meed of victory to the suffering soldier. The painful education of the soul, which is unintelligible as an abortive preliminary to annihilation, becomes plain as a preparation to a higher state, in which the purified spirit enters upon the enjoyment of its regenerated faculties. Pope disregarded the fundamental principle of his Essay. The burthen of his argument in his first epistle is that the evils of the world are explained by the hypothesis that

[1] Epist. iii. ver. 19.
[2] Epist. i. ver. 73, 93–4.

Digitized by Google

they have an ulterior end. The moral life of man is the sphere in which we can best perceive the necessity for the principle, and follow its wise operation; and it was just this instance of a clear exemplification of his law which Pope was willing to reject. He admitted that the life of the saint upon earth might require no sequel, that his brief and self-denying history might properly begin and end with his passage from the cradle to the grave, that his implanted hopes and fears might be a deception, the objects proposed to his faculties a vain enticement, his sufferings a fruitless discipline, his conquest over sin a barren triumph, his growth in holiness the signal for resolving him into dust.

These considerations are not affected by the question of the distribution of happiness. Rewards and punishments might be meted out with an even hand, and this life singly would still be quite incompetent to fulfil the conditions of man's nature. But the pretext of Bolingbroke is itself unfounded, and he yielded to the exigencies of his infidelity when he maintained that the world had never furnished examples of unequal happiness which could call for future redress. Pope's efforts to prove the paradox are a continuous series of contradictions, sophistries, and misstatements. "Virtue alone," he says, "is happiness below," and "God intends happiness to be equal."[1] It follows, from these premises, that Pope did not mean that all the world were equally happy. Happiness he holds to be proportioned to virtue; the best men are the richest in earthly felicity. The supposition is repugnant to innumerable appearances, and Pope endeavoured to evade them by contending that happiness is not placed in "externals."[2] "Virtue's prize," he says, "is the soul's calm sunshine which nothing can destroy;" and he justly calls men "weak and foolish" who imagine that a better reward would be "a crown, a coach-and-six, a conqueror's sword," or the gown which is the badge of official dignity.[3] The fallacy is upon the surface. "The soul's calm sunshine" may mean peace of conscience or complete felicity. In the first sense it cannot be "destroyed" by physical torture; in the second sense, physical torture overclouds the "sunshine" and disturbs the "calm." It is vain to pretend that a virtuous man upon the rack has the same amount of mental ease as when he is in bodily comfort. "Externals" are one element in human happiness, or the worst persecutions which have desolated the world could not have occasioned the smallest exceptional sufferings to the good. "If pain," says Mackintosh, "were not an evil, cruelty would not be a vice."[4] Pope, in his luxurious retirement at Twick-

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 310. Argument to Epist. iv.
[2] Epist. iv. ver. 66.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 167—172.
[4] Mackintosh, Miscellaneous Works, ed. 1851, p. 13.

Digitized by Google

enham, might exclaim, "Condition, circumstance, is not the thing."[1] He would have thought differently if he had been the slave of a brutal master, or had been immured in one of the dungeons called "little-ease," where a prisoner of stout frame and sturdy principles was sometimes maimed in the process of squeezing him into a space too small for his coffin.

Pope's reason for his opinion is weaker than the opinion itself. "Present ill," he says, "is not a curse, nor present joy a good," since joy and misery depend on our "future views of better or worse," and "the balance of happiness" is kept even while the seemingly fortunate are "placed in fear," and the unfortunate in "hope."[2] "Pope's sylphs," remarked Fox to Rogers, "are the prettiest invention in the world. He failed most, I think, in sense; he seldom knew what he meant to say."[3] Here we have an instance of the failing. His proposition is that present happiness is independent of "externals," and his argument asserts that it is not. If "fortune's gifts" invariably fill the virtuous with "fear," and unfortunate circumstances buoy them up with "hope," if happiness depends exclusively on "future views of better," and misery on apprehensions of "worse," it follows that virtue imprisoned and persecuted is "in joy," and when free and prosperous is distressed. "Externals" are not, as Pope pretends, indifferent; he has merely transferred the preponderating weight to the opposite scale. Adversity is a more exhilarating state than prosperity; the inmate of "little-ease" was happier than his brethren of kindred virtue who were at large. Rewards and punishments should be interchanged. Criminals should be condemned to a life of luxury, and public benefactors should be sent to jail. The feelings Pope ascribed to the human mind are fictitious. Fear of reverses which do not appear to be impending, has little influence in marring enjoyment, and hope alleviates torments without depriving them of their sting.

The poet proceeds to unfold more particularly "what the happiness of individuals is, as far as is consistent with the constitution of this world."[4] All the good that God meant for mankind, "all the joys of sense, all the pleasures of reason, lie in three words,—health, peace, and competence."[5] The passage was versified from Bolingbroke, who for "health" has "health of body," for "peace" has "tranquillity of mind," and for "competence" has "competency of wealth."[6] Social intercourse and liberty must be added to the list, or "all the joys of sense," and all "the pleasures

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 57.
[2] Epist. iv. ver. 69—72.
[3] Recollections by Samuel Rogers, pp. 31, 35.
[4] Argument to Epist. iv.
[5] Epist. iv. ver. 77—80.
[6] Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. iv., p. 378.

Digitized by Google

of reason" are compatible with solitary confinement. Pope flings aside his previous doctrines. Four lines earlier every individual who had the misfortune to possess "all the joys of sense" was the slave of fear. Now these accompaniments are pronounced essential to happiness. Lately happiness was independent of externals, and now health of body and competency of wealth are declared to be indispensable. Pope's change of front did not strengthen his position. As health, peace, and competence are necessary to happiness they must be constant attendants on worth, or his paradox that happiness is proportioned to virtue falls to the ground. He accordingly affirmed, in a suppressed couplet, that "the blessings were only denied to error, pride, or vice," and the language in the text, to have any pertinency, must bear the same construction. But will virtue secure health? Yes, replies Pope, for "health consists with temperance alone," which, for the purpose of his argument, must mean that all the temperate are healthy. Safe from casualties, infection, and every other disorder, they bear about with them a charmed life, and die at last in a good old age. The poet passes over "competence," and in a subsequent part of his epistle allows that "virtue sometimes starves." [1]

He had no sooner resolved happiness into "health, peace, and competence," and claimed them for virtue, than he admits that vice may be "blessed" and virtue "cursed," or afflicted. A fresh assumption is introduced to restore the balance. "Contempt," he says, dogs "vice;" "compassion" attends upon "virtue." [2] The new powers are not more competent to the task assigned them than the hope and fear he had invoked before. Men who are not truly virtuous, and yet not infamous for vice, have frequently troops of friends, and meet with none of the contempt which is to bring down their happiness to the standard of their worth. Virtue, on the other hand, instead of rousing the compassion of those who could protect it, has, in numberless instances, provoked persecution, bonds, and death. Where the virtue is not the cause of the misery the sufferers are often not in contact with the compassion, or the sympathy is far from being an equivalent for the sorrow. Heaping fallacy upon fallacy Pope falls back upon the plea that "virtue disdains the advantages of prosperous vice." [3] Disdains the vicious means but constantly longs for the prosperous end. The martyr to conscience when shut up in "little-ease" was not indifferent to liberty. His compressed body, his cramped limbs, the deprivation of light, fresh air, books, and friends were horrible torture. There could be no stronger proof that happiness was not proportioned to virtue than

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 149. [2] Epist. iv. ver. 87.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 89.

Digitized by Google

that his "disdain of vice" should have compelled him to accept the alternative of a dungeon.

Hitherto Pope has argued that our virtue is the measure of our happiness. He next descends to the subsidiary proposition that "no man is unhappy through virtue," which means that the disasters of the virtuous are never the consequences of their virtue; they are the "ills and accidents that chance to all."[1] The proposition contains two assertions,—the first that virtue never brings upon us "ills and accidents," the second that it cannot protect us from them. Under the first head Pope points to the heroes who perished fighting for their country, and tells us that they did not meet their fate from "virtue," but from "contempt of life."[2] The martyrs to conscience may be reckoned by hundreds of thousands, and Pope would have us understand that none of them braved death in obedience to duty; they were simply weary of existence. He would deprive humanity of its noblest triumphs that virtue may be absolved from its manifest effects. He glides lightly over the absurd pretence that virtue has never entailed suffering, and dwells upon the second half of his proposition,—his admission that virtuous and wicked are equally exposed to "ills and accidents." Good and bad men, he says, are alike subjected to the laws of nature, and God will not "reverse these laws for his favourites." A falling wall crushes passengers without regard to virtue or vice;[3] blind forces take no cognisance of morality. The doctrine is inadmissible; the laws of nature cannot supersede the providence of God. Man's welfare and very existence are at the mercy of many human and material agencies which man is unable to anticipate or control. The Almighty preserves a glorious order in his physical laws, and it is incredible that he should permit a chaos in the highest department of our globe. He would not guard against irregularities in the action of insensate matter, and allow good men to be the sport of the endless hazards of life. The conclusions of reason are confirmed by revelation. "Are not two sparrows," says our Lord, "sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."[4] He who sees from the beginning the entire chain of causes and effects, can devise laws which will provide for particular cases without any subsequent interference. Or a man may be protected from a falling wall by a sudden impulse to his mind whereby he may forget to go, or have a motive to loiter, or to hasten forward, or to take another road.[5] Or there

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 98.
[2] Epist. iv. ver. 99—102.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 98, 121—130.
[4] Matt. x. 29—31.
[5] Wollaston, Religion of Nature Delineated, 7th ed., p. 192.

Digitized by Google

may be a temporary interference with mechanical laws; or the Almighty may use methods inconceivable by us. Not that his superintendence implies that his servants are safe from any of the ordinary operations of natural laws. Habitually to exempt the good would be to abolish prudence in their dealings with physical forces, and to engender presumption in the region of morals. The insecurity which keeps virtue vigilant and faithful, the hardy discipline which draws out ennobling energies, and corrects baser properties, would be turned to carelessness and corruption. The interests of the virtuous will not permit that they should be constant and conspicuous exceptions to the common lot. But the "ills and accidents" never strike at random. The human race is not with the Deity an abstract conception. He beholds every creature in its individuality, and shields and chastens each by the rules of a wisdom which can never be suspended. The idea we frame of his attributes negatives the hypothesis of Pope. God cannot fail to establish a harmony between physical laws, and the dispensation which befits each particular man.

In admitting that calamities befall mankind without reference to virtue and vice, Pope was drawn into statements which completely upset his principle that happiness is always proportioned to desert. He asks if virtue "made Digby, the son, expire, why his father lives full of days and honour?" [1] He might be asked in turn, why, if good men in this life have an equal share of happiness, the father should have lived fifty years longer than the son? For happiness to be equal there must be an equality of duration as well as of degree. He grants that "virtue sometimes starves," and thinks it enough to answer, in the face of historical facts, that virtue does not occasion the destitution. "Bread," he says, "is the price of toil, not of virtue, and the good man may be weak, be indolent." [2] Indolence is a vice, and irrelevant to the discussion. The weakness may be a misfortune, and Lazarus is not less deserving because he is covered with sores. Or the "good man" may be neither "indolent" nor "weak," and yet be starved, which happened to thousands of protestants who were driven from their homes and employments by the callous bigotry of Louis XIV. Whatever the cause of the starvation, the balance of happiness is disturbed, and Pope, to mask the flaw in his argument, added that the "claim" of starving virtue was not "to plenty, but content." [3] Now contentment is of two kinds. There is a contentment of happiness which is incompatible with excessive suffering, and a contentment of resignation which acquiesces in the severest dispensations of Providence. St. Paul said in the latter sense, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," [4] which does not

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 105.
[2] Epist. iv. ver. 149—155.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 156.
[4] Philipp. iv. 11.

Digitized by Google

prevent his speaking repeatedly of the afflictions he endured, or keep him from asserting that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous."[1] Of this type is the contentment of starving virtue,—a patient submission to trial, and not the contentment which is required to produce equality of happiness. Human nature has been denied the capacity for neutralising all degrees of anguish. Pope straightway slides off into the subterfuge that the craving for bread is "a demand for riches." He inveighs against the rapacious desire, and insists that nothing will satisfy man.[2] He undertook to prove that happiness is proportioned to virtue, and finding his text too hard for him he substitutes an invective against insane discontent.

A few undoubted truths are appended to the main argument of Pope. He says that only a fool will think a man with health, and a clear conscience, hated by God because he lacks a thousand a year.[3] He tells us that genuine honour and shame are dependent on conduct, and not on high or low station,[4] and that titles, power, fame, etc., are insufficient to make bad men happy.[5] He comes to the instance of "superior parts," and the inconsistency recommences. He supposes the great intellect to be combined with learning, wisdom, and patriotic virtue.[6] Out of compliment to his "guide, philosopher, and friend," Pope takes Bolingbroke for the typical example of this imposing union of lofty qualities. In him we are to behold the universal fate of generous, philanthropic wisdom. He "is condemned to drudge in business or in arts" without any one to "second" him, or "judge" him rightly. He aspires "to teach truths, and save a sinking land; few understand, all fear, and none aid him." When he "drudged in arts" the world received coldly his wordy rhetoric. When he "drudged in business" the country only saw in him an intriguer for power. Novel ideas in politics, signal originality in literature, often work their way slowly. Genius and patriotism have faith in their conceptions, and are not daunted by opposition. The public spirit which has to battle at all can seldom be placed under softer conditions than Bolingbroke enjoyed. He had every luxury of a civilised age; he had health and energy; he had unbroken leisure; he had books at will; he had freedom to say and write what he pleased; he was safe from every injury to person and property. Virtuous patriotism, sitting at ease in a delightful library, and surrounded by blessings, might be expected to exert itself with cheerful hope to enlighten a tasteless and misguided nation. Quite the reverse. "Painful pre-eminence!" exclaims Pope, and he declares that Bolingbroke by being "above life's

[1] Heb. xii. 11.
[2] Epist. iv. ver. 157—166.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 189—192.
[4] Epist. iv. ver. 193—204.
[5] Epist. iv. ver. 205—258.
[6] Epist. iv. ver. 259—268.

Digitized by Google

weakness" is above "its comforts too." The moral is that wisdom is not to be desired; the pain exceeds the benefit. Happiness is proportioned to virtue under the worst conditions of brutal persecution, and yet wise and virtuous patriots, in the midst of the comforts of life, are deprived of every comfort in life by the lamentable circumstance that they are "above life's weakness."

There are many more contradictions in Pope's epistle, which is a tissue of inconsistency and incoherence. He might have maintained a less absolute doctrine with complete success. He might have shown that the inequalities are less than they appear on a superficial view. He might have pointed out that ultimate happiness can only arise from the conduct which puts us at peace with ourselves and with God. He might have dwelt on the satisfaction which lifts up the mind when conscience asserts its majesty, and refuses to make the least concession to suffering. The remaining disproportion between happiness and virtue is vindicated by the moral blessing of affliction, which by fitting man for happiness prepares the way for perfect harmony between happiness and virtue in a blessed immortality. Trials, in the magnificent phrase of Shakespeare, are "our outward consciences."[1] The pains of the last sickness which precedes death are the consistent termination to the scheme. Good men die as they have lived, in more or less suffering, that the work of life may be completed,—that their better qualities may be developed and strengthened, the remains of evil laid bare and extinguished. And though all men are not submitted to the same tests either in their lives or their deaths, the endless variety in their dispositions accounts for the diversity in their circumstances. The Almighty Being who alone knows the secrets of the heart adapts the "outward conscience" to the inward.

There is a weightier question than the distribution of happiness. Of the innumerable discussions on the theory of morals by far the most important is whether the end we propose to ourselves should be self-interest or virtue. Pope adopted the selfish system without reserve. The two principles, he says, which govern man, "self-love and reason, aspire to one end, pleasure," and since their end is the same, he accused the schoolmen of being "at war about a name" when they refused to confound them.[2] He apparently had not a suspicion that schoolmen, or any one else, had ever imagined that reason could reveal another end to man than interest well understood. He reverts to his selfish system in the epistle on Happiness, and proclaims in the first line that "happiness is our being's end and aim." Virtue, the love of God and man, are only means to promote our individual happiness, and selfishness is, and ought to be, the supreme end of every creature. The doctrine, as we have seen,

[1] Henry V., Act iv., Sc. 1.

[2] Epist. ii. ver. 85.

Digitized by Google

when discussing Pope's second epistle, contradicts the universal human conscience. The theoretical falsehood is fruitful in disastrous results. The moral law, the law of good in itself, is greater than the individual, and he bows down before its inviolable sanctity, its absolute right to dominion. He is raised above personal consequences. He knows that the universal law of good embraces his good, and the reflection helps to sustain him in his trials, but his main end is to fulfil a law which is superior to his individual happiness, and which binds him by its intrinsic sacredness, and independent authority. He dares not overrule it by his passing inclinations, and endures all things rather than be guilty of a sacrilegious encroachment on its integrity. The man, on the contrary, whose one end is happiness, and who considers virtue to be simply the means for compassing the end, has nothing outside himself which is of the least importance to him, except in so far as it can be made subservient to his personal felicity. Creator and creation are only viewed as ministers to his unmitigated selfishness. Governed by this single self-indulgent idea, and deriving no strength from the separate supremacy of the moral law, he is ill prepared for a life of sacrifice. He cannot forego in the present the happiness which he conceives to be the sole end of his being, and he prefers immediate ease to interest well-understood. The system of Pope was the doctrine of Epicurus. He, too, taught that pleasure was "the end and aim" of man, and virtue the only effectual means. His followers soon disregarded the means in their impatience to reach the end, and epicureanism became synonymous with grovelling sensuality. In vain we oppose the selfishness of a long-sighted prudence to the selfishness of the hour. "Prudence," as Kant says, only "counsels," and the steady ascendency over temptation is reserved for the virtue which "commands." Common language proclaims the intuitive principle of the mind. No man, not lost to shame, could venture to say, "I must tell truth because it is prudent;" he says, "I must be truthful because it is right."

Pope had not the remotest idea that he was an epicurean. He believed that his system of ethics, with happiness for an end and virtue for the means, was new to philosophy, and he did not hesitate to state that all "the learned" who preceded him had been "blind."[1] He exemplified his assertion by the instance of the epicureans and stoics. The stoics reversed the terms of the epicurean formula; virtue alone was their end, and happiness, the spontaneous, unsought consequence. The real characteristics of these great rival schools were unknown to Pope. He described them by false contrasts, and ignorantly charged them with the folly of defining "happiness to be happiness." Greatest wonder of all, he alleged against the epicurean

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 19.

Digitized by Google

doctrine, which was his own, that it "sunk men to beasts."[1] He would naturally expound the systems he understood the best, and hence we may estimate the extent of his qualifications for dismissing every previous ethical theory with compendious contempt. A sentence from Bolingbroke bears witness to the scanty knowledge of Pope, and discloses the source of his scorn. "I think," writes Bolingbroke, "you are not extremely conversant in the works of Plato, and you may suspect therefore that I aggravate the impertinence of his doctrines."[2] The impertinent doctrines were a portion of the divine platonic ethics, and Pope, uninstructed in the most famous systems of the ancients, did but reiterate the superficial contempt of his master.

In place of the "mad opinions" of learned moralists, Pope enjoins us to "take nature's path,"[3] little dreaming that he was repeating the maxim of the sects he despised. "The perfection of man," says Diogenes Laertius, quoting Zeno, the founder of the stoic school, "is to follow nature, and that is to live virtuously, for nature leads us to that." All the moralists accepted nature for their oracle; but the scholars gave different versions of her responses. Pope in his second epistle insisted that man was too weak to interpret them. A Newton, he said, who could "climb from art to art" would inevitably be baffled in morals, for whatever "reason wove, passion would undo."[4] In the fourth epistle the difficulty has vanished; "all states can reach, all heads conceive" happiness, and its parent morality; "there needs but thinking right, and meaning well."[5] To think rightly and do rightly, which was before impossible for even the lords of human kind, is declared to be within easy reach of all the world. Nature spoke with two voices to Pope, and what one voice affirmed the other denied.

Able writers have sometimes ridiculed the precept, "Follow nature," which means the laws of human nature, not perceiving that they were the necessary foundation of morals. "The way to be happy," says the philosopher in Rasselas, "is to live according to nature, in obedience to that universal, and unalterable law, with which every heart is originally impressed." "Sir," answers the prince, "I doubt not the truth of a position which a man so learned has so confidently advanced. Let me only know what it is to live according to nature." The philosopher replies in unintelligible jargon, and Johnson adds, "The prince soon found that this was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer."[6] The unreflecting disdain shows poorly by the side of Butler's comment on the maxim. "The ancient moralists," he

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 23, 28.
[2] Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 286.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 29.
[4] Epist. ii. ver. 35—42.
[5] Epist. iv. ver. 29—34.
[6] Rasselas, chap. xxii.

Digitized by Google

said, "had some inward feeling or other, which they chose to express in this manner, that man is born to virtue, that it consists in following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death. They had a perception that injustice was contrary to their nature, and that pain was so also. They observed these two perceptions totally different, not in degree, but in kind, and the reflecting upon each of them, as they thus stood in their nature, wrought a full intuitive conviction that more was due, and of right belonged to one of these inward perceptions than to the other; that it demanded in all cases to govern such a creature as man."[1] Apart from revelation we can have no other knowledge of morality than nature affords. Honestly interrogated nature does not put us off with unmeaning ambiguities. As we learn through our appetites that we are intended to eat and drink, so a higher faculty informs us that we are to govern our appetites, and the whole of our being, by the supreme principles we call duty. Every time we have a consciousness that our conduct is right or wrong, every time we condemn or applaud the vice and virtue of our fellow men, every time the law enforces justice and punishes injustice, we confess that duty is in accordance with nature. The precept, "follow nature," is the rational injunction to contemplate virtue in its inner source that we may see it in its purity, and recognise its right to supremacy. If Pope had kept to the precept, and remembered that for parents intentionally to train up children in iniquity is the height of infamy, he would hardly have imagined that "the Deity poured fierce ambition into Cæsar's mind." If he had reflected that we condemn follies and vanities, he would not have supposed that they were a provision of the Deity for our comfort. If he had consulted conscience, and noticed that it instructs us to love good in itself as well as our own good, to love God and our neighbour as an end as well as a means, he would not have taught that the motive to virtue was unmingled selfishness. If he had been at the trouble to remark that duty takes in the whole circle of existence, and imposes immutable laws, he would not have embraced the doctrine that moral government was carried on by ruling passions which set up different principles of action in different individuals, and in every instance narrow life to an exclusive, and usually vicious propensity. The observation of nature would have saved Pope from these, and many other errors, which were the consequence of his piecing together bits of theories from books without submitting them to the test he recommended to his readers.

The deepest ethical thinkers have seldom, in all things, been faithful interpreters of nature. Their errors, often momentous, had a different origin from those of Pope. Few persons trace back moral

[1] Butler, Sermons, Preface, pp. vii., xi.

Digitized by Google

impressions to the principles from which they flow. They act on the intuitive conceptions which precede philosophy, and which, not being pared and twisted to fit a theory, are as comprehensive as nature. The philosopher classifies the implanted propensities and convictions, describes them with precision, and brings them into stronger relief. But what he gains in distinctness he is apt to lose in breadth; he curtails while he elucidates. His ambition is to discover simplicity in complexity, unity in variety, and he dismembers nature that he may reduce the phenomena within the limits of a general law. Zeno and Epicurus are examples of the tendency. They agreed that man had properly only a single end to which his whole being should be directed. The epicureans said that this end, or chief good, was pleasure, which depends on personal feeling; the stoic said it was virtue, the submission to the universal rule of right, which is above personal preferences. An ordinary mortal who does not philosophise, and has no care to force nature into the mould of an hypothesis, never questions that he is constituted for the double end of happiness and virtue. The two often clash, and he is not perplexed by the impossibility of satisfying both. When one must yield he knows that virtue is paramount, and he usually believes that the present sacrifice of happiness to virtue will be succeeded by a kingdom in which they will be finally reconciled. The partial doctrine set up by the stoic kept virtue on her high, heroic throne; the doctrine of the epicurean degraded her into the slave of pleasure: the first school ennobled, the second debased human nature, but both mutilated it. Each system came into contact with facts which compelled its adherents to be inconsistent or absurd, and enlightened disciples preferred inconsistency to absurdity. This passion for general laws at the expense of truth is conspicuous throughout the whole history of philosophy. The profoundest investigators have been prone to select single aspects of many-sided nature, and make the part the law for the whole. The false generalisation impels the theorist to suppress and distort refractory phenomena, or he endeavours to hide under transparent evasions his deviations from his hypothesis, or he lapses into contradictions from which he turns away his eyes, not wishing to perceive them. The spurious unity, which is the infirmity of philosophers, was not the vice of Pope. He adopted, on the contrary, a chaos of principles which were mutually destructive. He accepted contributions from any school, because he understood none. He was so unversed in philosophy that in the account which he drew up of his "Design," he asserted that the science of human nature was reduced to "a few clear points," and that the "disputes" were all on the details. His "design" was to keep to the "few clear points" which alone, in his opinion, were of much importance to mankind. They were principally the origin of evil, the theory of morals, the origin of government and society. The "clear points"

Digitized by Google

had produced whole libraries of controversy, the "disputes" had descended in full vigour to Pope's day, and they have continued undiminished on to ours. His own solutions of the problems were contradictory, and he was hopelessly at war with himself on the very topics for which he claimed universal peace. He did not depart in his "Design" from his habit of self-contradiction, and the moment he had stated that there were no disputes on the general principles, he took credit for "steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite." He at the same time arrogated for his "system of ethics" the special "merit" that it was "not inconsistent." He had just enough knowledge to seduce him into an unconscious exposure of his ignorance. His delusions are intelligible when we learn the nature of his philosophical training. "I write to you, and for you," says Bolingbroke, "and you would think yourself little obliged to me if I took the pains of explaining in prose what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse, and in the character of a poetical philosopher who may dwell in generalities." [1] Bolingbroke wrote to instruct Pope, and Pope only cared to learn the "generalities" he was to put into verse. He never acquired the elements of philosophy; he had merely been furnished with materials for a philosophical poem. The few ideas he gleaned at random from other sources served no better end than to increase the confusion. He said "he chose verse" because it was more concise and impressive than prose.[2] The alleged choice was necessity. His meagre knowledge would have been ludicrous in a formal treatise. The ceremonious robe of verse was essential to conceal the deformed and diminutive body.

De Quincey thought that the "formal exposure of Pope's hollow-heartedness" would be most profitably accomplished by laying open thoroughly the ethical argument of the Essay on Man. He declined the task as too long and polemical for an article in a journal, but he stated his views in general terms. He said that the poem "sinned chiefly by want of central principle, and by want therefore of all coherency amongst the separate thoughts." He objects that the sense will vary with the nature of the connecting links we supply, and he ascribes the opposite interpretations of Crousaz and Warburton to the ambiguity which leaves readers the choice of "a loyal or treasonable meaning." [3] He imputes the fault to the impossibility of completing the argument without spoiling the poetry, and to the superficial nature of Pope's studies, "if study we can call a style of reading so desultory as his." This vagrant habit of mind he attributes to "luxurious indolence." "The poet," he says, "fastidiously retreated from all that threatened labour. He fluttered among the

[1] Bolingbroke, Works, vol. iv. p. 430.
[2] The Design. See *post*, p. 344.
[3] De Quincey, Works, ed. 1863, vol. viii. pp. 21, 51; xii. pp. 25, 33.

Digitized by Google

flower-beds of literature or philosophy far more in the character of a libertine butterfly for casual enjoyment, than of a hard-working bee pursuing a premeditated purpose." [1] Indolence cannot justly be charged upon Pope. He plodded at his art with the steadiness of a man who follows a regular calling.[2] His ignorance of philosophy, his want of due preparation for his Essay, arose from defects of understanding, and not from a moral infirmity of will. He was self-educated, and had never penetrated in his youth by regular and sustained approaches to the heart of any difficult science. He skimmed literature to pick up sentiments which could be versified, and to learn attractive forms of composition. His mind took the set of his early habits, and he appears in manhood to have had no conception of philosophical thought, no glimmer of the combination of philosophical details into an integral design. His works abound in isolated ideas which are marked by sound sense, and side by side with them are many idle or extravagant notions, and glaring contradictions. The pieces were not struck off at a heat. They were built up slowly, composed patiently, and corrected repeatedly. He never spared pains, and the want of reflection his works discover was the fault of an intellect unconscious of its weaknesses. To him the disjointed bits of philosophy presented no gaps. He says in his "Design" that the system "was short yet not imperfect." He believed that the conciseness added to "the force as well as grace of his arguments," and that he had nowhere "sacrificed perspicuity to ornament, wandered from precision, or broken the chain of the reasoning." His love of fame would have prevented his sending forth knowingly a weak and fragmentary poem. His moral apathy did not therefore consist in the self-indulgent negligence which refuses to put itself to a strain. The moral offence was in another direction,—in the ambiguities which were intended to pass off the Essay for anti-christian with infidels, and for christian with believers, and which resulted in Pope's adoption of the first interpretation under Bolingbroke, and of the second under Warburton. The dereliction of principle was worse than De Quincey supposed. He has equally underrated the blots in the philosophy when he imagined that Pope erred only by omissions. The "chasms" in his ethics are trifling compared to the radical vice of his doctrines, and the repeated conflict of jarring systems. The "audacious dogmatism and insolent quibbles" [3] of Warburton would not have been needed in expanding an abbreviated argument. He had to distort the obvious meaning of Pope in order to produce a semblance of consistency, and he has still oftener left the language of the text without

[1] De Quincey, Works, vol. viii. p. 44.
[2] Johnson, Lives of the Poets, vol. iii. p. 105.
[3] De Quincey, Works, vol. xii. p. 32.

Digitized by Google

comment because it was beyond the power of shameless misinterpretation to effect an ostensible harmony.

The judgments on the Essay on Man have been very various. "It appears to me," says Voltaire, "the most beautiful, the most useful, the most sublime didactic poem that has ever been written in any language." He said on another occasion that Pope "carried the torch into the abyss of being, and that the art of poetry, sometimes frivolous, and sometimes divine, was in him useful to the human race."[1] Voltaire had a twofold reason for his admiration. As a hater of christianity he hailed in the Essay the championship of natural religion against revealed, and as an author he delighted in the rhymed philosophy which was the staple of his own prosaic verse. Marmontel joined in the praise of the poet, but formed a juster estimate of the moralist. "Pope has shown," he said, "how high poetry could soar on the wings of philosophy. But he had adopted a system which presented terrible difficulties, and in reply to the complaints of man on the misery of his condition he usually offers images for proofs, and abuse for reasons."[2] The censure is just. Pope loves to silence objections by vilifying mankind, and calling his adversaries impious, proud, and fools. Dugald Stewart agreed with Voltaire. "The Essay on Man," he says, "is the noblest specimen of philosophical poetry which our language affords; and, with the exception of a very few passages, contains a valuable summary of all that human reason has been able hitherto to advance in justification of the moral government of God."[3] The "few faulty passages" were subsequently specified by Stewart, and such is the power of sound to withdraw the mind from the sense that this able metaphysician overlooked the fundamental errors of the poem, albeit they contradicted his own ethical views. Hazlitt differs as much from Stewart as Marmontel did from Voltaire. "The Essay on Man," he tells us, "is not Pope's best work. All that he says, 'the very words and to the self-same tune,' would prove just as well that whatever is is wrong, as that whatever is is right."[4] The remark is but a slight exaggeration of the truth. The logic of assertion, and often of vituperative assertion, in which Pope abounded, is available for every system, and his admission that God is the instigator of evil was a fit foundation for a pessimist philosophy. De Quincey's opinion is the most unfavourable of all. "If the question," he says, "were asked, What ought to have been the best among Pope's poems? most people would answer, the Essay on Man. If the question were asked, What is the worst? all people of judgment would say, the Essay on Man. Whilst yet in its rudiments this

[1] Voltaire, Œuvres, tom. xii. p. 156; xxxvii. p. 260.
[2] Marmontel, Éléments de Littérature, Art. Épitre.
[3] Dugald Stewart, Works, ed. Hamilton, vol. vii. p. 133.
[4] Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets, ed. 1841, p. 147.

Digitized by Google

poem claimed the first place by the promise of its subject; when finished, by the utter failure of its execution, it fell into the last." [1] "Execution" is used by De Quincey in its widest sense, and includes the philosophy of the Essay. This we have endeavoured to estimate, and have now to speak of the poetry.

"In my mind," says Lord Byron, writing of Pope, "the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth," and he adds that "ethical or didactic poetry requires more mind, more wisdom, more power" than all the "descriptions" of natural scenery that were ever penned, "and all the epics that ever were founded upon fields of battle." [2] To the assertion that ethical poets transcended all other poets in genius, Hazlitt answered, that the "mind, wisdom, and power" is displayed in the "philosophic invention," and as this "rests with the first author of a moral truth," or moral theory, a copyist is not great because he gives a metrical form to an ethical common-place. "The decalogue," he says, "as a practical prose composition, or as a body of moral laws and precepts, is of sufficient weight and authority, but we should not regard the putting of this into heroic verse as an effort of the highest poetry." [3] To the assertion that ethical poetry must take precedence of all other poetry, "because moral truth and moral conduct are of such vast and paramount concernment in human life," Hazlitt answered, that "it did not follow that they were the better for being put into rhyme." "This reasoning," he continues, "reminds us of the critic who said that the only poetry he knew of, good for anything, was the four lines beginning 'Thirty days hath September,' for that these were really of some use in finding out the number of days in the different months of the year. The rules of arithmetic are important in many respects, but we do not know that they are the fittest subjects of poetry." [4] The reply of Hazlitt is conclusive. Lord Byron had confounded the importance of facts with their fitness for poetry, the repetition of a truth with the genius which discovers it. He was "in a great passion," says De Quincey, "and wrote up Pope by way of writing down others," the others being Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. [5] He had taken a false measure of his men. They were too strong in their own poetical convictions to be mortified by the absurdities of an intemperate rival.

The error of Byron was akin to the misconception of the office of didactic poems, which De Quincey exposed in his criticism on Pope's Essay on Man. "As a term of convenience," he says, "didactic may serve to discriminate one class of poetry, but didactic it cannot

[1] De Quincey, Works, vol. viii. p. 42.
[2] Life of Byron by Moore, 1 vol. ed. p. 696.
[3] Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets, pp. 375, 377—8.
[4] Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets, p. 374.
[5] De Quincey, Works, vol. xii. pp. 21, 22.

Digitized by Google

be in philosophic rigour without ceasing to be poetry." If the object of Armstrong had been to teach Medicine, of Dyer to produce a manual for shepherds and cloth manufacturers, of Philips to write a treatise for gardeners and makers of cider, he maintains that it would have been idiotcy to begin by putting on the fetters of metre. He remarks that a worse restriction is the necessity of omitting a vast variety of details, and capital sections of the subject, and that in the constant need to forego either poetry or instruction the poet never hesitates to abandon the instruction. The true object, he conceives, of a didactic poem is to bring out the "circumstances of beautiful form, feeling, incident, or any other interest" which lurk in didactic topics. The sentiment which the tutor neglects the poet evolves, and he introduces utilitarian knowledge for the sole purpose of eliciting an element distinct from its bare, prosaic utility.[1] This is the rational theory. In Pope's generation, and for some years afterwards, a different idea was widely prevalent. "The end of the didactic poem," says Marmontel, "is to instruct. It were to be wished that the principles of the most important arts should all be reduced to verse. It is thus that at the birth of letters all useful truths were consigned to memory. To bring back the didactic poem to its primitive utility ought to be the object of emulation to the poets of an age of light."[2] The system which Marmontel recommended for an age of light was only fitted for an age of darkness. The utility of a didactic work depends on its lucidity, its precision, and its fullness. The use is defeated if the instruction is fragmentary, incoherent, circuitous, and cumbrous. When men emerge from ignorance, and when knowledge begins to grow systematic and exact, the employment of verse for expounding arts, sciences, philosophy, and history becomes puerile and impotent. The moment they are brought under the dominion of the enlightened understanding the freedom of prose is essential to unfold them with clearness, completeness, and accuracy. The suggestion of Marmontel for restoring didactic poetry to its primitive use was the way to reduce it to imbecility. The events of English history are of greater moment than the cutting off Miss Fermor's curl, and an English history in verse would be "higher poetry" according to Byron, more "useful poetry" according to Marmontel, than the Rape of the Lock. In reality it would not be high or useful, poetry or history, but simply a folly. The didactic poets who had a truer comprehension of the nature of poetry, and who endeavoured to render the rules of an art or science subservient to poetic effect, have seldom succeeded. The inherent, prosaic element preponderated, and the Arts of Poetry, Criticism, Translating

[1] De Quincey, Works, vol. viii. pp. 45—50; xii. 297—303.
[2] Marmontel, Éléments de Littérature, Art. Didactique.

Digitized by Google

Verse, etc. are for the most part dreary compositions which afford as little delight as instruction.

Bolingbroke had right conceptions of the characteristics of didactic poetry, and he imparted his views to Pope. "Should the poet," he says, "make syllogisms in verse, or pursue a long process of reasoning in the didactic style, he would be sure to tire his reader on the whole, like Lucretius, though he reasoned better than the Roman, and put into some parts of his work the same poetical fire. He must contract, he may shadow, he has a right to omit whatever will not be cast in the poetic mould, and when he cannot instruct he may hope to please. In short, it seems to me, that the business of the philosopher is to dilate, to press, to prove, to convince, and that of the poet to hint, to touch his subject with short and spirited strokes, to warm the affections, and to speak to the heart." [1] Bolingbroke's theory of poetry was superior to his practical taste. He said that all Pope's writings were pre-eminent for "the happy association of great coolness of judgment with great heat of imagination." "Pope's Essay on Criticism," he says again, "was the work of his childhood almost; but is such a monument of good sense and poetry as no other, that I know, has raised in his riper years." [2] The man who could discover transcendent poetry in the Essay on Criticism, and great heat of imagination in all Pope's writings, could have had but a faint, diluted perception of the imaginative and poetic. His belief that the ethical philosophy of the Essay on Man could be brought under his law of didactic poetry was a fresh instance of his want of insight into the demands both of poetry and philosophy. A system of philosophy cannot be conveyed in elegant extracts. "Every part," says de Quincey, "depends upon every other part: in such a nexus of truths, to insulate is to annihilate. Severed from each other the parts lose their support, their coherence, their very meaning; you have no liberty to reject or choose." It was not enough for Pope to detail his system. He had to vindicate, and establish it. "In his theme," continues De Quincey, "everything is polemic; you move only through dispute, you prosper only by argument and never-ending controversy. There is not positively one capital proposition or doctrine about man, about his origin, his nature, his relations to God, or his prospects, but must be fought for with energy, watched at every turn with vigilance, and followed into endless mazes, not under the choice of the writer, but under the inexorable dictation of the argument. Here lay the impracticable dilemma for Pope's Essay on Man. To satisfy the demands of the subject was to defeat the objects of poetry. To evade the demands in the way that Pope has done, is to offer us a ruin for a palace." [3]

[1] Bolingbroke, Works, vol. iii. p. 44.
[2] Bolingbroke, Works, vol. ii. p. 220; iii. p. 128.
[3] De Quincey, Works, vol. viii. p. 50.

Digitized by Google

The poetry could not escape without injury. The philosophic pretensions Pope advanced at the outset compelled him to embark in prosaic arguments; the philosophy and the poetry were mutually destructive. Left to himself he would have kept to his "ethics in the Horatian way," to the sketches of character, and reflections upon human conduct, which constitute his Moral Essays. His "guide" dictated to him a more ambitious philosophy,—not the "divine philosophy which is musical as Apollo's lute,"[1] which touches tender feelings, and appeals to the intuitive moral emotions, but a hybrid philosophy too scholastic to move the heart, and too meagre and perplexed to satisfy the understanding.

The false scheme of embodying scientific philosophy in verse determined in advance the failure of the Essay on its poetic side. There might be passages of good poetry, but not a good poem. "The episodes in the Essay on Man," says Hazlitt, "the description of the poor Indian, and the lamb doomed to death, are all the unsophisticated reader ever remembers of that much talked of production."[2] The remark which Hazlitt employed to condemn the Essay, was used by Bowles in its favour. The ethics, in his eyes, were only the groundwork for poetical embroidery. "We hardly," he said, "think of the philosophy, whether it is good or bad," and he represented the reader hurried away by the finished and touching pictures of the Indian and the lamb, which are exceptions to the didactic tenor of the poem, and speak to the sympathies of mankind. Hazlitt's application of the criticism was correct, and the eulogy, or apology, put forward by Bowles, was really censure. The happy episodes are but a fragment of the four epistles. The rest is designed for philosophical reasoning, and if we hardly think of the philosophy, there is little left except sound. The philosophy is not dimmed by the blaze of poetry. There is no splendour of imagery, no brilliancy of idea to overshadow the argument, and the sole reason the philosophy fails to take hold of the mind is because it is vague and disconnected, because the whole, as De Quincey says, "is the realisation of anarchy."[3] The want of philosophic unity might have been largely compensated by the personal unity of strong conviction; the earnest faith and feelings of the man might have stood in the place of the scientific completeness of the subject. In nothing was Pope more deficient. For personal convictions he substituted any discordant notion which he fancied would look well in verse, and the Essay is no more bound together by the pervading spirit of individual sentiment than by logical connection. The languid inattention which the poem invites is seen in the statement of Bowles that there

[1] Milton, Comus, ver. 476.
[2] Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets, p. 378.
[3] De Quincey, Works, vol. viii. p. 51.

Digitized by Google

is "a nice precision in every word." No one could attempt to get at Pope's meaning without being frequently tormented by the difficulty, and sometimes the impossibility, of interpreting his lax, indeterminate language. "Hardly thinking of the philosophy," Bowles did not observe that there was often a lamentable want of precision in Pope's conceptions, and when these are misty and confused, the expression of them cannot be rigorous and definite. Loose and ambiguous phraseology was not the only fault of style. The use of inversions, and of unlicensed, elliptical modes of speech, was a cardinal blemish in Pope's poetry. The failing reached its height in the Essay on Man. Many of the contortions are barbarous, and were enough of themselves to dispel the delusion that Pope was distinguished by correctness of composition. His grammatical faults, when not deliberate to force a rhyme, are comparatively venial. Such oversights are found in all authors, and proceed from inadvertence; they are little more than clerical errors. The deformities of vicious construction are of a different order. They arose from defect of literary power, from the incapacity to reconcile the requirements of verse with the rules of English. The maimed and distorted language obscures the sense, destroys or debases the poetry, and lessens the general impression of his genius. The Essay was altogether a mistake. A slip from a neighbour's tree was planted in an uncongenial soil, and the cultivation bestowed upon it produced little more than feeble rootlets, and sickly shoots.

M. Taine asserts that from the Restoration to the French Revolution, from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume, all our literature, both prose and verse, bears the impress of classic art. The mode, he says, culminated in the reign of Queen Anne, and Pope, he considers, was the extreme example of it. The characteristics which M. Taine ascribes to the classic era are, in the matter, common-place truths, and, in the manner, a style finished and artificial,—noble language, oratorical pomp, and studied correctness. Poetry ceased to be inventive; the very composition is uniform, and the obvious or borrowed thoughts are all cast in one mould. Verse is nothing more than cold, rational prose, a species of superior conversation measured off into lengths, and fringed with rhyme; the form predominates over the matter; the ostentatious exterior is the mask to impoverished, colourless ideas.[1] The habit of M. Taine is to generalise a partial truth into extravagance. Many of the most eminent authors who flourished between the English Restoration and the French Revolution wrote in a style far removed from that which M. Taine calls classical,—in an inelegant, uncondensed style as Locke, in a crude, clumsy style as Bishop Butler,

[1] Taine, Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise, 2nd ed. tom. iii. p. 91; iv. pp. 172—176, 203.

Digitized by Google

in a vigorous, colloquial style as Bentley, in a homely, straightforward style as Swift, in an unpretentious, narrative style as De Foe, in a loose, familiar style as Burnet. The verse differs like the prose, though in a less degree, and is not "of a uniform make as if fabricated by a machine."[1] The witty and grotesque Hudibras of Butler, the tales, and many short poems of Prior, the humourous, satiric verses of Swift, the Songs and Fables of Gay, the Seasons of Thomson, the heroics of Pope, are all in dissimilar styles. Neither is the substance of the prose and verse, from the Restoration to the French Revolution, an invariable common-sense mediocrity. There is a great display of genius in political philosophy and political economy, in moral, metaphysical, and natural science, in manifold species of satire and fiction, and, omitting Milton, who was formed under earlier influences, in various kinds of poetry, short of the highest. M. Taine was partly conscious of the facts, as may be seen in his individual criticisms, which are a refutation of his general theory. There is this much truth in his view, that there was a growing tendency to cultivate style, and in some writers the art degenerated into the artificial. Among the numerous varieties of the defect one is a monotonous structure of verse and sentence, another the attempt to disguise the commonness of the thoughts by the elaboration of the workmanship. These are frequent faults in the poetry of Pope, and the mannerism remains when the execution is a failure. His style is admirable in parts, but he falls far below Dryden in the general elasticity of his composition, in the wealth of his language, and in the subtle intricacies of metrical harmony. His thoughts are often gems rendered lustrous by the skill of the cutter, but intermingling with them are counterfeit stones which impose by their glitter on the superficial observer, and when examined are found worthless.

[1] Taine, tom. iv. p. 175.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TO THE READER.[1]

As the epistolary way of writing hath prevailed much of late, we have ventured to publish this piece composed some time since, and whose[2] author chose this manner, notwithstanding his subject was high and of dignity, because of its being mixed with argument, which of its nature approacheth to prose. This, which we first give the reader, treats of the nature and state of man with respect to the universal system. The rest will treat of him with respect to his own system, as an individual, and as a member of society, under one or other of which heads all ethics are included.

As he imitates no man, so he would be thought to vie with no man in these epistles, particularly with the noted author of two lately published;[3] but this he may most surely say, that the matter of them is such as is of importance to all in general, and of offence to none in particular.[4]

[1] This prefatory notice only appeared in the first edition of the first epistle.

[2] "Whose" is by some authors made the possessive case of "which," and applied to things as well as persons.—LOWTH.

[3] Two "Epistles to Mr. Pope concerning the Authors of the Age," by the poet Young. They were published in 1730.

[4] The second Epistle of the Essay on Man had the brief preface which follows: "The author has been induced to publish these Epistles separately for two reasons, the one that he might not impose upon the public too much at once of what he thinks incorrect; the other, that by this method he might profit of its judgment on the parts, in order to make the whole less unworthy of it."

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE DESIGN.[1]

HAVING proposed to write some pieces on human life and manners, such as, to use my Lord Bacon's expression, come home to men's business and bosoms, I thought it more satisfactory to begin with considering man in the abstract, his nature and his state; since to prove any moral duty, to enforce any moral precept, or to examine the perfection or imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what condition and relation it is placed in, and what is the proper end and purpose of its being.

The science of human nature is, like all other sciences, reduced to a few clear points. There are not many certain truths in this world. It is therefore in the anatomy of the mind as in that of the body, more good will accrue to mankind by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the conformations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation. The disputes are all upon these last, and, I will venture to say, they have less sharpened the wits than the hearts of men against each other, and have diminished the practice, more than advanced the theory of morality. If I could flatter myself that this Essay has any merit, it is in steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, in passing over terms utterly unintelligible, and in forming[2] a temperate, yet not inconsistent, and a short, yet not imperfect, system of ethics.

[1] "The Design" was prefixed in 1735, when Pope inserted the four Epistles of the Essay on Man in his works.

[2] The early editions have "forming out of all."

Digitized by Google

This I might have done in prose; but I chose verse, and even rhyme, for two reasons. The one will appear obvious; that principles, maxims, or precepts so written, both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards. The other may seem odd, but is true. I found I could express them more shortly this way than in prose itself; and nothing is more certain, than that much of the force as well as grace of arguments or instructions depends on their conciseness. I was unable to treat this part of my subject more in detail, without becoming dry and tedious; or more poetically, without sacrificing perspicuity to ornament, without wandering from the precision, or breaking the chain of reasoning. If any man can unite all these, without diminution of any of them, I freely confess he will compass a thing above my capacity.

What is now published, is only to be considered as a general map of man, marking out no more than the greater parts, their extent, their limits, and their connexion, but leaving the particular to be more fully delineated in the charts which are to follow. Consequently, these Epistles, in their progress (if I have health and leisure to make any progress) will be less dry, and more susceptible of poetical ornament. I am here only opening the fountains, and clearing the passage. To deduce the rivers, to follow them in their course, and to observe their effects, may be a task more agreeable.

Digitized by Google

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE I.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH RESPECT TO THE UNIVERSE.

Of man in the abstract—I. That we can judge only with regard to our own system, being ignorant of the relation of systems and things, ver. 17, &c. II. That man is not to be deemed imperfect, but a being suited to his place and rank in the creation, agreeable to the general order of things, and conformable to ends and relations to him unknown, ver. 35, &c. III. That it is partly upon his ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hope of a future state, that all his happiness in the present depends, ver. 77, &c. IV. The pride of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more perfection, the cause of man's error and misery. The impiety of putting himself in the place of God, and judging of the fitness or unfitness, perfection or imperfection, justice or injustice, of His dispensations, ver. 113, &c. V. The absurdity of conceiting himself the final cause of the creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world, which is not in the natural, ver. 131, &c. VI. The unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence, while on the one hand he demands the perfections of the angels, and on the other the bodily qualifications of the brutes, though, to possess any of the sensitive faculties in a higher degree, would render him miserable, ver. 173, &c. VII. That throughout the whole visible world, an universal order and gradation in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which causes a subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to man. The gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflection, reason; that reason alone countervails all the other faculties, ver. 207. VIII. How much further this order and subordination of living creatures may extend, above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part only, but the whole connected creation, must be destroyed, ver. 233. IX. The extravagance, madness, and pride of such a desire, ver. 259. X. The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state, ver. 281, &c., to the end.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

AN

ESSAY ON MAN.

IN FOUR EPISTLES.

EPISTLE I.

AWAKE, my St. John![1] leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of kings.[2]
Let us, since life can[3] little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die,[4]

[1] For "St. John" the manuscript has "Memmius," and the first edition "Lælius." Memmius was an author and orator of no great distinction to whom Lucretius dedicated his De Rerum Natura. Lælius was celebrated for his statesmanship, his philosophical pursuits, and his friendship, and is described by Horace as delighting, on his retirement from public affairs, in the society of the poet Lucilius. Thus the name was fitted to the functions of Bolingbroke, and the relation in which he stood to Pope.

[2] Pope's manuscript supplies various readings of this line:

puzzled	to flattered
puzzling	to blustering
grovelling	low-thoughted

To working statesmen and ambitious kings.

In a letter to Swift, Dec. 19, 1734, Pope says that the couplet was a monitory, and ineffectual hint to Bolingbroke, to give up politics for philosophy. If the censure was directed against the party vices of the man the reproof is inconsistent with the eulogy on his patriotism, Epist. iv. ver. 265, and if against his pursuit in the abstract, it is folly to say that statesmanship is one of the "meaner things" which should be left to "low ambition," and empty "pride."

[3] MS.:

Since life, my friend, can, etc.

[4] Denham, of Prudence:

Learn to live well, that thou may'st die so too:
To live and die is all we have to do:

the latter of which verses our poet has inserted without alteration in his Prologue to the Satires, ver. 262.—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Expatiate free o'er all this scene of man;[1]
A mighty maze![2] but not without a plan;[3]
A wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot;[4]
Or garden tempting with forbidden fruit.[5]
Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;[6]
The latent tracts, the giddy heights, explore,[7]
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;[8]
Eye nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,[9]
And catch the manners living as they rise;[10]

[1] This exordium relates to the whole work, first in general, then in particular. The 6th, 7th, and 8th lines allude to the subjects of this book,—the general order and design of Providence; the constitution of the human mind, whose passions cultivated are virtues, neglected vices; the temptations of misapplied self-love, and wrong pursuits of power, pleasure, and false happiness.—POPE.

"The whole work" was to have been in four books, and the phrase "this book" means the four published Epistles of the Essay on Man, which were to form the first book of the full design.

[2] In the first edition,

A mighty maze of walks without a plan.

This Pope altered because, says Johnson, "if there was no plan it was vain to describe or to trace the maze."

[3] The 6th verse alludes to the subject of this first Epistle—the state of man here and hereafter, disposed by Providence, though to him unknown.—POPE.

[4] Alludes to the subject of the second Epistle,—the passions, their good or evil.—POPE.

[5] Alludes to the subject of the fourth Epistle,—of man's various pursuits of happiness or pleasure.—POPE.

[6] The 10th, 13th, and 14th verses allude to the subject of the second Epistle of the second book,—the characters of men and manners.—POPE.

The four published Moral Essays were a portion of the projected second book.

[7] The 11th and 12th verses allude to the subject of the first Epistle of the second book,—the limits of reason, learning, and ignorance.—POPE.

This Epistle was never written, but some part of the matter was incorporated into the fourth Book of the Dunciad.

[8] MS.:

Of all that blindly creep the tracts explore,
And all the dazzled race that blindly soar.

Those who "blindly creep" are the ignorant and indifferent; those who "sightless soar" are the presumptuous, who endeavour to transcend the bounds prescribed to the intellect of man.

[9] Dryden, Absalom and Achitophel, Part ii.:

while he with watchful eye
Observes, and shoots their treasons as they fly.—WAKEFIELD.

Dryden, Aurengzebe, Act iii.:

Youth should watch joys and shoot 'em as they fly.

[10] These metaphors, drawn from the field sports of setting and shooting, seem much below the dignity of the subject, and an unnatural mixture

Digitized by Google

Laugh where we must, be candid[1] where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man.[2]

I. Say first, of God above or man below,
What can we reason but from what we know?
Of man, what see we but his station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer?[3]
Through worlds unnumbered though the God be known,[4]
'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.
He, who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,[5]
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle[6] other suns,
What varied being peoples ev'ry star,[7]
May tell why heav'n has made us as we are.[8]

Man can reason only from things known, and judge only with regard to his own system.

of the ludicrous and serious.—WARTON.

They are the more so as Pope is not content with barely touching the metaphor of shooting *en passant*, but pursues it with so much minuteness. Let us "*beat* this ample field,"—"*try* what the *covert* yields,"—"*eye* nature's walks,"—"*shoot* folly." An illustration, if not at all dignified, or in correspondence with the theme, should not be pursued so minutely that the mind must perforce observe its meanness.—BOWLES.

[1] "Candid" here bears the unusual sense of "lenient and favourable in our judgment."

[2] Alludes to the subject which runs through the whole design,—the justification of the methods of Providence.—POPE.

Milton, Par. Lost, i. 26:

And justify the ways of God to men.—WARTON.

[3] The last part of the verse is barbarously elliptical. The meaning is that all our reasonings respecting the end of man must be drawn from his station here, and to this station we must refer all that we learn respecting him. Since we can know nothing but what relates to our present condition, the doctrine of a future life is excluded.

[4] MS.:

Through endless worlds His endless works are known,
But ours, etc.

[5] MS.:

He who can all the flaming limits pierce,
Of worlds on worlds that form one universe.

[6] "And what" was the reading of all editions till that of 1743. Wollaston's Religion of Nature, ed. 1750, p. 143: "The fixed stars are so many other suns with their several sets of planets about them."

[7] MS.:

What other habitants in ev'ry star.

[8] This was the reading of the first edition which Pope ultimately restored, but in the edition of 1735 the line stands thus:

May tell why heav'n made all things as they are.

Digitized by Google

But of this frame, the bearings and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations[1] just, has thy pervading soul
Looked through,[2] or can a part contain the whole?[3]
Is the great chain that draws all to agree,[4]
And drawn supports,[5] upheld by God or thee?

Man is not therefore a judge of his own perfection or imperfection, but is certainly such a being as is suited to his place and rank in creation.

II. Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less?[6]
Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade!

Pope's assertion in the text that it is impossible for us to "tell why heaven has made us as we are," unless we had a complete insight into the plan of universal creation, contradicts ver. 48, where he says that "it is plain there must be somewhere such a rank as man."

[1] First edition: "And centres."

[2] Bolingbroke, Fragment 43: "As distant as are the various systems, and systems of systems that compose the universe, and different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tied together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies."—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Pascal's Thoughts, translated by Dr. Kennet, 2nd ed., 1727, p. 288: "If a man did but begin with the study of himself he would soon find how incapable he was of proceeding further. For what possibility is there that the part should contain the whole?"

[4] I should have pointed out the expression and great effect of this line as illustrating the subject it describes; but Ruffhead says "it is the most heavy, languid, and unpoetical of all Pope ever wrote, and that the expletive 'to' before the verb is unpardonable."—BOWLES.

[5] An allusion to the golden chain of Homer, which the poet represents as sustained by Jove, with the whole creation appended to it.—WAKEFIELD.

[6] "Why one reason," says Wakefield, "should be harder than the other I am unable to discern." The passage is taken, as Warton pointed out, from Voltaire's remarks on Pascal's Thoughts, but Voltaire put the questions on the same footing, and did not pretend that the second was harder to solve than the first. "You are astonished," he says "that God has made man so contracted, so ignorant, and so unhappy. Why are you not astonished that he has not made him more contracted, more ignorant, and more unhappy?" Neither question ought to have presented any difficulty to Pope, since it was "plain" to him that "the best possible system" required that "there should be somewhere such a rank as man." All who admit the attributes of the Deity must allow that every portion of the world, sentient or insensible, is the consummation of wisdom with reference to its place in the infinite and eternal scheme. "God," says Leibnitz, "does not even neglect inanimate things;

Digitized by Google

Or ask of yonder argent fields[1] above
Why Jove's satellites[2] are less than Jove![3]
Of systems possible, if 'tis confessed
That wisdom infinite[4] must form the best,
Where all must full or not coherent be,[5]
And all that rises rise in due degree,
Then, in the scale of reas'ning life, 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:[7]

they are unconscious, but God is conscious for them. He would reproach himself with the least real defect in the universe, although no one perceived it."

[1] Wakefield quotes Milton, Par. Lost, iii. 460, where the phrase "those argent fields" is applied to the heavens.

[2] This word is commonly pronounced in prose with the e mute in the plural, as in the singular, and is therefore only of three syllables; but Pope has in the plural continued the Latin form and assigned it four. I think, improperly.—JOHNSON.

[3] Pope says that we cannot tell why Jupiter's satellites are less than Jupiter. Any mathematician could have shown him that if Jupiter was less than his satellites they would not revolve round him.—VOLTAIRE.

Warburton, to evade Voltaire's criticism, put a strained and paraphrastic interpretation upon Pope's lines. Their natural meaning is, that man is too ignorant to comprehend why he is not less instead of greater,—nay, that he cannot even tell why oaks are taller than weeds, why Jupiter's satellites are less than Jupiter, and all his investigations into the earth and the heavens will not supply him with the answer.

[4] Pope did not generally condescend to the artificial inversion which places the adjective after the substantive. Here, in a passage where simplicity was an object, we have "systems possible" followed by "wisdom infinite,"—combinations, too, which have the effect of producing a disagreeable monotony, occurring in the same part of the lines to which they respectively belong.—CONINGTON.

[5] Bolingbroke, Fragment 43: "Since infinite wisdom not only established the end, but directed the means, the system of the universe must necessarily be the best of all possible systems."—WAKEFIELD.

[6] There must be no interval, that is, between the parts, or they will not cohere.

[7] Bolingbroke, Fragment 43: "It might be determined in the divine ideas that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe. In this case it was necessary that there should be some creatures at our pitch of rationality."—WAKEFIELD.

The theory of a chain of beings was adopted by Bolingbroke and Pope from Archbishop King's Essay on the Origin of Evil. Arguing from the analogy of our own world, King contended that a universe fully peopled with superior natures would leave room for an inferior grade, and these for lower grades still, in a continuously descending scale. There must either be inferior creatures, or else voids in creation, and we may presume that the maximum of existence is most conducive to the ends of benevolence and wisdom.

Digitized by Google

And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong.[1]
  Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.[2]
In human works, though laboured on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce;
Yet serves to second too some other use.[3]
So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;[4]
'Tis but a part we see,[5] and not a whole.[6]

[1] MS.:

Is but if God has placed his creature wrong.

[2] Bolingbroke, Fragment 50: "The seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary to the real perfection of the whole."—WAKEFIELD.

The sentence quoted by Wakefield was copied by Bolingbroke from Leibnitz. Lord Shaftesbury adopted the same hypothesis in his Inquiry concerning Virtue. If, he says, our earth is a part only of some other system, and if what is ill in our system makes for the good of the general system, then there is nothing ill with respect to the whole. Rousseau, who heartily embraced the doctrine, remarks that "we cannot give direct proofs for or against, because these proofs depend on a complete knowledge of the constitution of the universe, and of the ends of its author."

[3] Bolingbroke, Fragments 43 and 63: "We labour hard, we complicate various means to bring about some one paltry purpose.—In the works of men the most complicated schemes produce very hardly and very uncertainly one single effect: in the works of God one single scheme produces a multitude of different effects, and answers an immense variety of purposes."—WAKEFIELD.

How clearly and closely is this sentiment expressed by Pope, and yet how difficult to render into verse with precision and effect.—BOWLES.

In the first line the phrase "one single," for "one single movement," is especially inelegant. Bowles might have selected many couplets from the Essay on Man more deserving of the commendation. The thought which Pope owed to Bolingbroke, Bolingbroke owed to Leibnitz, who says in his Théodicée, "Everything in nature is connected, and if a skilful artizan, engineer, architect, statesman, often makes the same contrivance serve for several purposes, we may affirm that God, whose wisdom and power are perfect, does so always." Hence Pope contends that what is defective in man considered separately, may be advantageous in relation to the hidden ends he is intended to serve.

[4] Bolingbroke, Fragments 43: "We ought to consider the world no otherwise than as a little wheel in our solar system; nor our solar system any otherwise than as a little but larger wheel in the immense machine of the universe; and both the one and the other necessary perhaps to the motion of the whole."—WAKEFIELD.

[5] MS.:

We see but here a part, etc.

[6] Since the monarchy of the uni-

Digitized by Google

When the proud steed shall know why man restrains
His fiery course, or[1] drives him o'er the plains;
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god;[2]
Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend
His actions', passions', being's, use and end;
Why doing, suff'ring, checked, impelled; and why
This hour a slave, the next a deity.[3]
Then say not man's imperfect, heav'n in fault;
Say rather man's as perfect as he ought:[4]
His knowledge measured to his state and place,[5]
His time a moment, and a point his space.[6]

verse is a dominion unlimited in extent, and everlasting in duration, the general system of it must necessarily be quite beyond our comprehension. And since there appears such a subordination, and reference of the several parts to each other, as to constitute it properly one administration or government, we cannot have a thorough knowledge of any part without knowing the whole. This surely should convince us that we are much less competent judges of the very small part which comes under our notice in this world than we are apt to imagine. — BISHOP BUTLER.

[1] MS.:

When the proud steed shall know why man now reins
His stubborn neck, now drives, etc.

[2] In the former editions,

Now wears a garland an Egyptian god.— WARBURTON.

A bull was kept at Memphis by the Egyptians, and worshipped, under the name of Apis, as a god. Other oxen were sacrificed to him, which brought the bovine "victims" and the bovine "god" into direct contrast.

[3] Pope may mean that we cannot tell with respect to the general scheme of Providence why we are made what we are, in which case he unsays what he had said just before, that "it is plain there must be somewhere such a rank as man." Or he may mean that we cannot tell with respect to ourselves the use and end of our being and its vicissitudes, in which case the doctrine would debase every person who received it, by diverting him from his true end, which is to imitate and adore the perfections of God.

[4] The expression, "as he ought," is imperfect for "ought to be."— WARTON.

[5] Bolingbroke, Frag. 50: "The nature of every creature is adapted to his state here, to the place he is to inhabit."

[6] This line is the application of man of the language which the schoolmen applied to the Deity,— that his eternity was a moment, and his immensity a point. The couplet in the MS. was at first as follows:

Lord of a span, and hero of a day,
In one short scene to strut and pass away.

Digitized by Google

If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or here or there?[1]
The bless'd to-day is as completely so,
As who began a thousand years ago.[2]

His happiness depends on his ignorance to a certain degree.

III. Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state;
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know;
Or who could suffer being here below?[3]
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.[4]
O blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle marked by heav'n:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,[5]

[1] MS.:

What then imports it whether here or there?

[2] Ed. 1:

If to be perfect in a certain state,
What matter here or there, or soon or late?
And he that's bless'd to-day as fully so,
As who began ten thousand years ago.

Omitted in the subsequent editions. —POPE.

This note appeared, 1735, in vol. 2 of the quarto edition of Pope's Poetical Works. The lines originally followed ver. 98, and when they re-appeared in the text in 1743 they were shifted to their present position. They are especially bad,—elliptical and prosaic in expression, and sophistical in argument. The suffering which matters nothing when it is over is not unimportant while it lasts. A prolonged imprisonment in a noisome dungeon does not cease to be a penalty because the captive will one day be free. The Bible recognises the bitterness of human misery, but teaches that christians are to be reconciled to it on account of the moral purposes it subserves, and the endless felicity which ensues. Pope notes in his MS. that ver. 76 is "reversed from Lucretius on death," and Wakefield quotes the translation of Dryden which Pope copied:

The man as much to all intents is dead
Who dies to-day, and will as long be so,
As he who died a thousand years ago.

[3] See this pursued in Epist. iii. ver. 66, etc., ver. 79, etc.—POPE.

[4] This resembles Phædrus, Fab. v. 15:

Ipsi principes
Illam osculantur, quâ sunt oppressi, manum.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Matt. x. 29.—WARBURTON.

Pope, in the MS., had expanded the idea, and added this couplet:

No great, no little; 'tis as much decreed
That Virgil's Gnat should die as Cæsar bleed.

It is doubtful whether Virgil was the author of the Culex or Gnat, which, says Mr. Long, "is a kind of Bucolic poem in 413 hexameters, often very obscure." Pope's assertion that there

Digitized by Google

Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,[1]
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.
Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher death, and God adore.
What future bliss he gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.[2]
Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blessed.[3]
The soul, uneasy, and confined from[4] home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.
Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;[5]
His soul proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk[6] or milky way;[7]

And on his hope of a relation to a future state.

is "no great, no little," is contradicted by the passage in St. Matthew to which Warburton refers. Our Lord there assures us that "we are of more value than many sparrows," and the ruin of a world, with its myriad of sentient beings, must be of infinitely greater moment in the sight of the Deity than the bursting of a bubble. Pope repeats, ver. 279, a statement which is repugnant to reason, to revelation, and to his own system of a scale of beings.

[1] MS.:

Systems like atoms into ruin hurled.

[2] Edit. 1. Fol. and Quart.:

What bliss above he gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy bliss below.

Further opened in Epist. ii. ver. 283. Epist. iii. ver. 74. Epist. iv. ver. 346, etc.—POPE.

[3] Pope has frequently contradicted this line, and allowed that men who place their happiness in right objects, and use the recognised means, enjoy a present pleasure, in addition to the hope of an equal or greater pleasure in the future. This hope in turn is constantly realised, in contradiction to the lively saying ascribed to Lord Bacon, that "hope makes a good breakfast, but a bad supper."

[4] All editions till that of 1743 had "at" for "from." The home of the soul was this world according to the first reading, and the next world according to the second. The alteration was made under the auspices of Warburton to get rid of the imputation that Pope doubted or disbelieved the immortality of the soul.

[5] MS.:

Seeks God in clouds or on the wings of wind.

The savage, that is, being ignorant of scientific laws, supposes the wind and the rain to be produced directly by the Deity without the interposition of secondary causes.

[6] Dryden, Threnod. August. Stanza 12:

Out of the solar walk and heaven's highway.—HURD.

[7] The ancient opinion that the souls of the just went thither. See Tully, Som. Scipion. and Manilius i. [ver. 733—799.]—POPE.

Digitized by Google

Yet simple nature to his hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topped hill,[1] an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,[2]
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no christians thirst for gold.[3]
To be, contents his natural desire;
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.[4]

The pride of aiming at more know-

IV. Go, wiser thou! and in thy scale of sense,[5]
Weigh thy opinion against Providence;[6]

Virtue is in Cicero the title of admission into the milky way, but the version which Manilius gives of the popular creed assumes that the milky way is the general receptacle for earthly celebrities, without any special regard to their morals.

[1] Shakespeare, Tempest, Act iv. Sc. 1. "The cloud-capped towers."

[2] Dryden, Æn. vii. 310:

From that dire deluge through the wat'ry waste.—WAKEFIELD.

MS.:

This hope kind nature's flattery has giv'n,
Behind his cloud-topp'd hills he builds a heav'n;
Some happier world which woods on woods infold,
Where never christian pierced for thirst of gold.

Pope must have assumed that the Indian's hope of a blissful immortality was an unsubstantial dream, or he would not have called it "nature's *flattery*."

[3] MS.:

Where gold ne'er grows, and never Spaniards come,
Where trees bear maise, and rivers flow with rum.
Exiled or chained he lets you understand
Death but returns him to his native land;
Or firm as martyrs, smiling yields the ghost,
Rich of a life that is not to be lost.
But does he say the Maker is not good,
Till he's exalted to what state he would:
Himself alone high heav'n's peculiar care,
Alone made happy when he will and where?

There is an earlier form of the last couplet:

He waits for bliss in a remoter sphere
Nor proudly claims it when he will and where.

[4] So in Homer, at the funeral of Patroclus, xxiii. 212, of our poet's translation:

Of nine large dogs, domestic at his board,
Fall two, selected to attend their lord.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] "Sense" is put for "the senses," and Pope exclaims against the folly of censuring the government of God on the strength of the imperfect information which the senses supply.

[6] Bolingbroke, Fragment 25: "This is to weigh his own opinion against Providence." Pope adduces the contented faith of the savage to rebuke the dissatisfaction of certain civilised men. The contrast completely fails. The contentment and dissatisfaction are applied by Pope to different objects, the contentment of the savage being limited to his idea of a future life, whereas the dissatisfaction of civilised man is said to be chiefly with his present condition, about which the savage is often dissatisfied likewise. The imperfect in-

Digitized by Google

Call imperfection what thou fanci'st such,
Say, Here he gives too little, there too much![1]
Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,[2]
Yet cry, If man's unhappy, God's unjust;[3]
If man alone ingross not heav'n's high care,
Alone made perfect here, immortal there:[4]
Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,[5]
Re-judge his justice, be the god of God.[6]

115 ledge and perfection, and the impiety of pretending to judge of the dispensations of Providence, the causes of man's error
120 and misery.

formation of missionaries is not even sufficient warrant for asserting that all Indians believed in a future state, and if there were dissentients among them their case did not differ from that of civilised men. Above all the contentment of the Indian is the result of grovelling views, and uninquiring ignorance, and whatever may be the errors of infidels among ourselves they cannot be remedied by an appeal to those blind conceptions of the savage, which Pope supposed to be false. "Our flattering ourselves here," he said to Spence, "with the thoughts of enjoying the company of our friends when in the other world may be but too like the Indians thinking that they shall have their dogs and horses there."

[1] First edition:

Pronounce He acts too little or too much.

[2] "Gust," or the relish for anything, is the opposite of "disgust," and is applied by Pope to the pleasures of the palate. The word is found in Dryden, and several other writers, but never came into general use.

[3] MS.:

Yet if unhappy think tis He's unjust,

which is the reading of the first edition, except that "thou" is substituted for "if."

[4] The meaning cannot be that the caviller complained that other creatures were made perfect as well as himself, because nobody supposed that either men or animals were perfect. Pope apparently means that these persons complained that man was not an exception to the general law of imperfection and mortality, although he "alone" would then have been "perfect" in this world, and immortal in the next. It follows that the objectors disbelieved in the immortality of the soul, and that Pope thought their demand for immortality unreasonable.

[5] The "balance" in which qualities are weighed; the "rod" with which offences are chastised.

[6] Divines maintained that there must be a future state, or that many of the phenomena of this life would be inexplicable. Bolingbroke rejected a future state, and argued that this life was a scheme complete in itself. All who did not concur in his view "joined," he said, "in a clamour against Providence," and "murmured against his justice." Not that they had ever uttered a syllable against Providence, for they were devout and humble adorers of his perfections, but they denied that Bolingbroke's scheme was God's scheme, and Bolingbroke in his arrogance and passion insisted that whoever repudiated his philosophy set himself up against God. Pope versified the declamation of Bolingbroke, without pointing it to the class against whom it was originally directed.

Digitized by Google

In pride, in reas'ning pride,[1] our error lies;
All quit their sphere and rush into the skies!
Pride still is aiming at the bless'd abodes,
Men would be angels, angels would be gods.[2]
Aspiring to be gods if angels fell,
Aspiring to be angels men rebel:[3]
And who but wishes to invert the laws
Of order, sins against th' Eternal Cause.

The absurdity of conceiting himself the final cause of creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world which is not in the natural.

V. Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use, Pride answers,[4] "'Tis for mine!
For me kind nature wakes her genial pow'r,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flow'r;[5]
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me the mine a thousand treasures brings;
For me health gushes from a thousand springs;
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;
My footstool earth, my canopy the skies!"[6]

[1] The first edition reads "In pride, my friend, in pride," and the edition of 1735, "In reas'ning pride, my friend."

[2] Verbatim from Bolingbroke: "Men would be angels, and we see in Milton that angels would be gods."—WARTON.

Sir Fulk Greville, Works, 1633, p. 73:

Men would be tyrants, tyrants would be gods.—HURD.

[3] Lord Bacon's Advancement of Learning, ed. Montagu, p. 267: "Aspiring to be like God in power, the angels transgressed and fell; aspiring to be like God in knowledge, man transgressed and fell."

[4] Piety must equally answer with grateful adoration that all these things have been created for the use of man. The error of pride is in the assumption that they have been created for man alone, who is only one out of an infinity of creatures on our globe, as our globe again is only a portion of a larger system. Hence Pope intends us to infer, that it is folly for us to test all things by the consequences to ourselves. The language, however, which he puts into the mouth of pride is extravagant, and "can hardly," says M. Crousaz, "have been ever uttered by any one, unless it were in jest."

[5] MS.:

For me young nature decks her vernal bow'r,
Suckles each bud, and pencils ev'ry flow'r.

[6] Garth, Dispensary, i. 175:

His couch a trench, his canopy the skies.
—WAKEFIELD.

Pope remembered Isaiah lxvi. 1: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." No sane man could ever pretend that "earth was his footstool," and Pope alone is responsible for the unbecoming misapplication of the prophet's language.

Digitized by Google

But errs not nature from this gracious end,
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep[1]
Towns to one grave, whole nations[2] to the deep?[3]
"No," 'tis replied, "the first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial but by gen'ral laws:[4]
Th' exceptions few; some change since all began;[5]
And what created perfect?"—Why then man?
If the great end be human happiness,
Then nature deviates;[6] and can man do less?[7]

[1] MS.:

or when oceans
When earth quick swallows, inundations sweep.

[2] "A nation" in the first edition. The expression is hyperbolical. Pope alludes to such catastrophes as the inundation of Jutland when the sea broke down the dykes in 1634, and fifteen thousand people were drowned. Irruptions on a smaller scale have sometimes been occasioned by the rising of the sea during an earthquake. In that of 1783 the inhabitants of Scilla, in the kingdom of Naples, deserted their city to avoid being crushed by the falling houses, and fled to the shore. A mighty wave, which swept three miles inland, carried back with it 2473 persons, and their prince among the number. Cowper, The Task, ii. 117, has recorded the tragedy in his grandest verse:

Where now the throng
That pressed the beach, and hasty to depart,
Looked to the sea for safety? They are gone,
Gone with the refluent wave into the deep,
A prince with half his people.

[3] Pope says, that "earthquakes swallow towns *to* one grave, whole nations *to* the deep," where "to" should be "in." But this would not have suited the phrase "tempests sweep," and the poet preferred brevity to correctness.

[4] First edition:

Blame we for this the wise Almighty Cause;
No, 'tis replied, he acts by gen'ral laws.

The government by general laws, we are told, has "a few exceptions," which must either refer to the scripture miracles, which Pope did not believe when he wrote the Essay on Man, or to the doctrine of a special providence, which he opposes in the fourth epistle.

[5] "Some change" for "there has been some change," is bad English. The argument is not superior to the language. Plagues, earthquakes, and tempests, say the vindicators of nature, may in part be explained by the changes which have taken place since the creation of the world. Pope, Epist. iv. ver. 115, repeats that "evil" has been "admitted" through "change." As no reason is assigned for this conversion of physical good into physical evil, the supposition does not diminish the difficulty.

[6] On a cursory reading we might understand Pope to mean that nature sometimes deviates from her stated course for the purpose of promoting human happiness. This sense does not agree with the context, and the true interpretation is, that if the great end of terrestrial creation is allowed to be human happiness, then it is clear that nature sometimes deviates from that end, as in the instance of plagues and earthquakes.

[7] The assertion is monstrous that we cannot be expected to control our

Digitized by Google

As much that end a constant course requires
Of show'rs and sunshine, as of man's desires:
As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
As men for ever temp'rate, calm, and wise.[1]
If plagues or earthquakes break not heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?[2]
Who knows but He, whose hand the lightning forms,
Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms;
Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,[3]
Or turns young Ammon[4] loose to scourge mankind?[5]
From pride, from pride our very reas'ning springs;
Account for moral, as for nat'ral things:[6]

evil passions because nature has her storms, diseases, and earthquakes. This is not to justify the ways of God, but the ways of wicked men. The physical evil ordained by the ruler of the world, cannot be put upon the same foundation with the moral evil which reason and revelation condemn. Sin is permitted because it is better that offences should exist than that free will should be destroyed, but it is lamentable that we should will to do evil in preference to good. The justification of the abuses of free will is a distinct proposition from the argument into which Pope glides, that it is not harder to understand why man should be allowed to be a scourge to man than why suffering should be inflicted through the agency of earthquakes and pestilence.

[1] To draw a parallel between things of a nature entirely different is mere sophistry. A continual spring would be fatal to the earth and its inhabitants, but how would the world suffer if men were always wise, calm, and temperate?—CROUSAZ.

[2] Shortly after his father, Alexander VI., ascended the papal throne in 1492, Cæsar Borgia commenced the career of war, massacre, and murder which made him the scourge and terror of Italy. He was killed by a musket-ball at a petty siege in 1507. The conspiracy of Catiline against the Roman government was terminated by his death at the head of his banditti, B.C. 62, but from his depraved and desperate character there was every reason to believe that he would have used a victory to plunder with insatiable greediness, and to destroy with remorseless cruelty.

[3] God does not "pour ambition into Cæsar's mind," or the all-perfect being would be the author of sin. The aberrations of ambition are the acts of the ambitious man.

[4] Alexander the Great. He made a pilgrimage to the temple of Jupiter Ammon, in Africa, and the priests styled him son of their god. Upon the faith of the oracle his flatterers believed, or affected to believe, that he was of divine descent.

[5] The four lines, ver. 157—160, first appeared in the edition of 1743.

[6] MS.:

From whence all physical or moral ill?
'Tis nature wand'ring from the eternal will.

Pope plainly avows that physical

Digitized by Google

Why charge we heav'n in those, in these acquit?
In both to reason right is to submit.
Better for us, perhaps, it might appear,
Were there all harmony, all virtue here;
That never air or ocean felt the wind;
That never passion discomposed the mind.
But all subsists by elemental strife;
And passions are the elements of life.[1]
The gen'ral order,[2] since the whole began,
Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.[3]

VI. What would this Man? now upward will he soar,
And little less than angel, would be more![4]
Now looking downwards, just as grieved appears
To want the strength[5] of bulls, the fur of bears.[6]

The unreasonableness of the complaints against Providence, and that to possess

evil is the disobedience of inanimate nature to the Creator, as moral evil arose from the disobedience of man. The couplet, in an altered form, was transferred to Epist. iv. ver. 111, where the context confirms the interpretation which the present version appears to require.

[1] See this subject extended in Epist. ii. from ver. 100 to ver. 122; ver. 165, etc.—POPE.

Pope is answering the objections to moral evil. The passions for which he has undertaken to account are vicious in kind or in degree—they are the passions which are contrary to "virtue," ver. 166,—the passions of Borgia, Catiline, Cæsar, and Alexander,—and these are not elements essential to human life.

[2] Pope uses almost the very words of Bolingbroke: "To think worthily of God we must think that the natural order of things has been always the same; and that a being of infinite wisdom and knowledge, to whom the past and the future are like the present, and who wants no experience to inform him, can have no reason to alter what infinite wisdom and knowledge have once done."—WARTON.

In saying that the "general order" had been "kept," Pope did not mean that there were no exceptions, for he held that there had been "some change" since the beginning of things, which was to reject the fanciful principle of Bolingbroke. Infinite wisdom cannot err, but change is not necessarily the reparation of error, and a progressive may be preferable to a stationary system.

[3] This is Pope's summary of his weak defence of moral evil. Moral and physical irregularities, he says in effect, have always prevailed, and both are indispensable. He denies this in his third epistle, and asserts that universal innocence endured for several generations to the great advantage of man.

[4] Psalm viii. 5: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."—WARBURTON.

[5] MS.: "Brawn."

[6] Pope, in these lines, diverts himself with drawing the picture of a fool, that he may remark upon him,

Digitized by Google

more faculties would make us miserable.

Made for his use, all creatures if he call,[1]
Say what their use, had he the pow'rs of all:
Nature to these without profusion kind,[2]
The proper organs, proper pow'rs assigned;
Each seeming want compensated of course,
Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force:[3]
All in exact proportion to the state;[4]
Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.[5]
Each beast, each insect, happy in its own:[6]
Is Heav'n unkind to man, and man alone?
Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
Be pleased with nothing, if not blessed with all?[7]
The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,
But what his nature and his state can bear.[8]

and extend the remarks to mankind in general. But such fools are rarely to be met with, and I question whether one can be found infatuated to a degree like this.—CROUSAZ.

Bishop Butler, like Crousaz, did not believe that such "fools" existed. "Who," he asked, "ever felt uneasiness upon observing any of the advantages brute creatures have over us?" Pope's authority was The Moralists of Lord Shaftesbury. "Why, says one, was I not made by nature strong as a horse? Why not hardy and robust as this brute creature? or nimble and active as that other?"

[1] The inversion is harsh; and when the words are ranged in their proper order, "If he call all creatures made for his use," is but uncouth English.

[2] Shaftesbury's Moralists, Part ii. Sect. 4: "Nature has managed all for the best, with perfect frugality and just reserve; profuse to none, but bountiful to all."

[3] It is a certain axiom in the anatomy of creatures, that in proportion as they are formed for strength their swiftness is lessened; or as they are formed for swiftness their strength is abated.—POPE.

This is an error. The most powerful race-horses are often the fleetest.

[4] First edition:

So justly all proportioned to each state.

[5] Vid. Epist. iii. ver. 79, etc., and ver. 109, etc.—POPE.

[6] That is, in its own state or condition.

[7] First edition:

Each beast, each insect, happy as it can,
Is heav'n unkind to nothing but to man?
Shall man, shall reasonable man alone
Be or endowed with all, or pleased with none?

[8] First edition:

No self-confounding faculties to share,
No senses stronger than his brain can bear.

This rejected couplet embodied a fancy from Lord Shaftesbury's Moralists that the leading qualities in any being are always provided at

Digitized by Google

Why has not man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, man is not a fly.
Say what the use, were finer optics giv'n,
T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?[1]
Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?
Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain?[2]
If nature thundered in his op'ning ears,
And stunned him with the music of the spheres,[3]
How would he wish that heav'n had left him still
The whisp'ring zephyr, and the purling rill?
Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
Alike in what it gives, and what denies?

the expense of other organs, and that if man had been endowed with greater and more numerous bodily capacities his brain would have been starved.

[1] First edition:

What the advantage if his finer eyes
Study a mite, not comprehend the skies.

The second edition has some further variations:

Why has not man a microscopic sight?
For this plain reason, man is not a mite:
Say what th' advantage of so fine an eye?
T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the sky

Pope owed the thought, and the expression "microscopic eye" to Locke, Essay on the Human Understanding, bk. ii. chap. 23, sect. 12: "If by the help of microscopical eyes, a man could penetrate into the secret composition of bodies, he would not make any great advantage by the change if he could not see things he was to avoid at a convenient distance."

[2] The abbreviated language of the last four lines, which are not legitimate composition, makes it difficult to follow the construction: "Say what the use were finer touch given if, trembingly alive all o'er, we were to smart and agonise at ev'ry pore? Or what the use of quick effluvia darting through the brain, if we were to die of a rose in aromatic pain?"

[3] Locke, Essay on the Human Understanding, bk. ii. chap. 23, sect. 12: "If our sense of hearing were but one thousand times quicker than it is, how would a perpetual noise distract us. And we should in the quietest retirement be less able to sleep or meditate than in the middle of a sea-fight."—WARTON.

Butler, Hudibras, ii. 1, 617.

Her voice, the music of the spheres,
So loud, it deafens mortal ears.—
WAKEFIELD.

It was an ancient fancy that the planets rolled along spheres, emitting music as they went. Pope's supposition that the music would stun us, alludes to the remarks of Cicero, Somnium Scipionis, that the crash of harmony is so tremendous that human ears cannot receive it, just as human eyes cannot gaze at the sun. Warburton remarks that Pope should not have illustrated a philosophical argument by the example of an unreal sound.

Digitized by Google

There is an universal order and gradation through the whole visible world, of the sensible and mental faculties, which causes the subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to man, whose reason alone countervails all the other faculties.

VII. Far as creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:
Mark how it mounts to man's imperial race,[1]
From the green myriads in the peopled grass;
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,[2]
And hound sagacious on the tainted green:
Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,[3]
To that which warbles through the vernal wood!

[1] First edition:

Through gen'ral life, behold the scale arise
Of sensual and of mental faculties!
Vast range of sense from man's imperial race
To the green myriads, etc.

A very little observation would have satisfied Pope that "green" is not the prevailing hue of the "myriads in the peopled grass." Wakefield says that the expression "man's imperial race," in ver. 209, is from Dryden's Virg. Geo. iii. 377, and that the general argument is from Bolingbroke's Fragments: "There is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes, and even with them, up to man." This is what Leibnitz called "the law of continuity." "Nature," he said, "never proceeds by leaps."

[2] The manner of the lions hunting their prey in the deserts of Africa is this; at their first going out in the night-time they set up a loud roar, and then listen to the noise made by the beasts in their flight, pursuing them by the ear, and not by the nostril. It is probable, the story of the jackal's hunting for the lion was occasioned by observation of this defect of scent in that terrible animal.—POPE.

Pope was mistaken in his notion that the lion hunted by ear alone, and that his sense of smell was obtuse. His scenting powers are very acute. The account which Pope gives would not, if it were true, explain why the jackal should have been singled out for the office of lion's provider. The real reason is told by Livingstone. When the lion is devouring his prey, "the jackal comes sniffing about, and sometimes suffers for his temerity by a stroke from the lion's paw laying him dead." The persevering attempt of the lesser animal to share the spoils with the greater, led to the belief that the two worked in concert —that the jackal was the pioneer, and the lion the executioner. There are two other readings of ver. 213 in the MS.:

smell the stupid ass
Degrees of scent the vulgar brute between.

All the versions are deformed by the license of putting the preposition "between" after its noun.

[3] It was formerly a common belief that fish were deaf; but Pope ascribes to them some capacity of hearing, and this is now known to be correct.

Digitized by Google

The spider's touch how exquisitely fine![1]
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:[2]
In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew?[3]
How instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compared, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine![4]
'Twixt that and reason, what a nice barrier!
For ever sep'rate, yet for ever near!
Remembrance and reflection how allied;
What thin partitions sense from thought divide;[5]

[1] Dryden, Marriage-a-la-mode, Act ii.:

And when eyes meet far off, our sense is such,
That, spider-like, we feel the tender'st touch.
—WAKEFIELD.

These lines are admirable patterns of forcible diction. The peculiar and discriminating expressiveness of the epithets ought to be particularly regarded. Perhaps we have no image in the language more lively than that of ver. 218. "To live along the line," is equally bold and beautiful. In this part of the epistle the poet seems to have remarkably laboured his style, which abounds in various figures, and is much elevated. Pope has practised the great secret of Virgil's art, which was to discover the very single epithet that precisely suited each occasion. If Pope must yield to other poets in point of fertility of fancy, or harmony of numbers, yet in point of propriety, closeness, and elegance of diction, he can yield to none.—WARTON.

[2] The house-spider conceals itself in a cell, which is constructed below the web, and at a distance from it. The threads which are spun from the edge of the web to the spider's lurking-hole, vibrate when a fly comes in contact with the web, and are at once a telegraph to give information to the spider, and a bridge along which it can rush forward to secure its prey.

[3] When the nectar of flowers is poisonous, the bee has not the power of separating its noxious from its wholesome properties, nor do bees always avoid the flowers which are hurtful to them. Some honey which is fatal to man may not be injurious to the insects collecting it.

[4] At first it ran,

How instinct varies! What a hog may want
Compared with thine, half-reasoning elephant.—WARTON.

[5] Dryden, Absalom and Achitophel:

Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

Pope is illustrating his proposition that there must be grades of capacity for animal to be subject to animal, and all animals to man. The application of the couplet to his argument is obscure, and the couplet itself very vague. The "remembrance" closely "allied to reflection" appears to be the effort of attention by which we recall the dormant stores of memory. "Thought" is a dubious term, but seems to be put by Pope for the acts of mind which take their rise in the mind itself, as willing, imagining, reasoning, etc., in contradistinction to seeing, feeling, taste, etc., which are produced by the operation of external things upon the senses.

Digitized by Google

And middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never pass th' insuperable line![1]
Without this just gradation could they be
Subjected, these to those, or all to thee?
The pow'rs of all subdued by thee alone,
Is not thy reason all these pow'rs in one?

How much further this gradation and sub-ordination may extend, were any part of which broken the whole connected creation must be destroyed.

VIII. See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
Above, how high progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below![2]
Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,[3]
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing.[4] On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:[5]

[1] A two-fold or mixed nature was sometimes in old language called a "middle nature," such as a compound of mind and matter, or an amphibious animal, and Pope perhaps meant that the double nature "longs to join" in a more intimate union. Or he may have meant by "middle," an intermediate nature, such as any creature which has an order of beings above and below it, but then to satisfy Pope's phraseology there must be two of these middle natures which are longing to unite with each other, and the higher would not desire to be "joined" to the lower. The couplet seems at best to be mere mystical jargon.

[2] The idea is in Locke's Essay, bk. iii. chap. 6, sect. 12, which Warton quotes. Bolingbroke, Fragment 49, copied Locke and others, and Pope copied Bolingbroke.

[3] Ed. 1st:

Ethereal essence, spirit, substance, man.—Pope.

[4] This is a magnificent passage. Thomson had before said in Summer, ver. 333:

Has any seen
The mighty chain of beings, lessening down
From infinite perfection, to the brink
Of dreary nothing.—Warton.

Kennet's Pascal, p. 166: "He will find himself hanging, in the material scale, between the two vast abysses of infinite and nothing."

[5] All that can be said of a scale of beings is to be found in the third chapter of King's Origin of Evil, and in a note ending with these emphatic words: "Whatever system God had chosen, there could have been but a determinate multitude of the most perfect creatures, and when that was completed there would have been a station for creatures less perfect, and it would still have been an instance of goodness to give them a being as well as others."—Warton.

Digitized by Google

Or in the full creation leave a void,[1]
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed:[2]
From nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.[3]
And if each system in gradation roll[4]
Alike essential to th' amazing whole,[5]
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,[6]
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky:[7]
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurled,
Being on being wrecked, and world on world;
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble[8] to the throne of God![9]

[1] Suffer men, says Pope, to encroach upon superior powers, and either inferior powers must rise to the rank we have vacated, or by not moving forward into the gap, they will leave a void in creation.

[2] MS.:

In nature what it hates, a void;
Or leave a gap in the creation void;
The scale is broken if a step destroyed.

[3] Dryden, Love Triumphant, Act iv. Sc. 1:

Great nature, break thy chain, that links together
The fabric of this globe, and make a chaos.

[4] MS.:

Yet more ev'n systems in gradation roll.

[5] Bolingbroke, Fragment 42: "We cannot doubt that numberless worlds, and systems of worlds, compose this amazing whole, the universe."

[6] Milton, Par. Lost, vii. 242:

And earth self-balanced on her centre hung.

The tendency of the earth to move in a straight line is balanced by the attraction of the sun, and Pope supposes this attraction to cease.

[7] I like the reading of earlier editions better;

Planets and suns rush lawless through the sky.—WAKEFIELD.

[8] After Pope's death "tremble" was misprinted "trembles," and the error has been retained in most editions. The construction is, "Let planets and suns run lawless through the sky, let being be wrecked on being, world on world, let heaven's whole foundations nod to their centre, and let nature tremble to the throne of God!"

[9] These six lines, ver. 251—256, are added since the first edition.—POPE.

Ruffhead says "there is no reading these lines without being struck with a momentary apprehension." Without quite allowing this, we cannot but feel their great beauty and force. Line rises upon line, with greater effect and nobler imagery, and in the conclusion the poet has touched the idea with propriety, as well as dignity and sublimity. If he had been more particular, the passage would have been unworthy the grandeur of the subject; had he been less it would have been obscure. He has at once evinced judgment and poetry. If

Digitized by Google

All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
Vile worm!—O madness! pride! impiety![1]

The extravagance, impiety, and pride of such a desire.

IX. What if the foot, ordained the dust to tread,
Or hand, to toil, aspired to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repined
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?[2]
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this gen'ral frame:[3]
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains
The great directing Mind of all ordains.[4]
All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul;[5]

there be a word or two not quite suitable, perhaps it is "run," and "foundations nod." I could have wished such a word as "rushed lawless," or "flamed lawless through the sky."—BOWLES.

[1] The chief problem which Pope undertook to solve was the existence of moral evil. Yet, if man, in obedience to God's commands, became morally perfect, none of the disastrous effects the poet describes would ensue. Angels would not be hurled from their spheres; worlds would not be wrecked; nor would heaven's foundations nod to their centre. Reason and revelation unite in the conclusion that moral perfection would, on the contrary, be an unmitigated blessing. Consequently Pope's hypothesis explains nothing unless he had shown how it is that a system which rendered evil impossible would be inferior to our own.

[2] Plotinus, translated by Cudworth, Intellectual System, ed. Harrison, vol. iii., p. 479: "Some things in me partake only of being, some of life also, some of sense, some of reason, and some of intellect above reason. But no man ought to require equal things from unequal; nor that the finger should see, but the eye; it being enough for the finger to be a finger, and to perform its own office." —WARTON.

[3] Bolingbroke, Fragment 66: "Nothing can be more absurd than the complaints of creatures who are in one of these orders, that they are not in another."

[4] Vid. the prosecution and application of this in Epist. iv. ver. 162.—POPE.

[5] "Soul," says Samuel Clarke, "signifies a part of a whole, whereof body is the other part, and they, being united, mutually affect each other as parts of the same whole. But God is present to every part of the universe, not as a soul, but as a governor, so as to act upon everything in what manner he pleases, himself being acted upon by nothing." Warburton quotes some passages from Sir Isaac Newton asserting the omnipresence of the Deity, and the commentator affirms that the poet expressed the identical doctrine of the philosopher. This is a misrepresentation. The extracts of Warbuton are from the scholium to the Principia, where Newton adds, "God governs all things, not as a soul of the world, but as the Lord of the universe. The Godhead of God is his dominion, a

Digitized by Google

That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth, as in th' ethereal frame,
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,[1]
Lives thro' all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;[2]
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,[3]
As full, as perfect in a hair as heart;[4]
As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:[5]
To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.[6]

dominion not like that of a soul over its own body, but that of a Lord over his servants." The doctrine which Pope held in common with Sir Isaac Newton was the omnipresence of the Deity. The doctrine which Sir Isaac Newton repudiated, and which Pope maintained, was that the world was the body of God as the human frame is of man. The world in this sense was not the work of the Deity, but a portion of him. Pope abandoned his present creed, Epist. iii. ver. 229, where he says,

The worker from the work distinct was known.

[1] Every ear must feel the ill effect of the monotony in these lines. The cause is obvious. When the pause falls on the fourth syllable, we shall find that we pronounce the six last in the same time that we do the four first, so that the couplet is not only divided into two equal lines, but each line, with respect to time, is divided into two equal parts.—WEBB.

[2] Our poet is certainly indebted to the following verses of Mrs. Chandler on Solitude:

He's all in all: his wisdom, goodness, pow'r,
Spring in each blade, and bloom in ev'ry flow'r;
Smile o'er the meads, and bend in ev'ry hill,
Glide in the stream, and murmur in the rill:
All nature moves obedient to his will.

Dryden, in the State of Innocence, Act v., was probably also in our poet's recollection:

Where'er thou art, he is: th' eternal mind
Acts through all places, is to none confined;
Fills ocean, earth, and air, and all above,
And through the universal mass does move.
—WAKEFIELD.

[3] "Our mortal part," is put in opposition to "soul," and the antithesis is a recognition of the soul's immortality. The allusion was too slight to offend Bolingbroke, or, perhaps, to attract his notice.

[4] Dugald Stewart observes that every one must be displeased with this line, because the triviality of the alliteration is at variance with the sublimity of the subject.

[5] First edition:

As the rapt Seraphim that sings and burns.

The name Seraphim, says Warburton, signifies burners, and Wakefield quotes, in illustration, from Spenser's Hymn of Heavenly Beauty, stanza 14:

And those eternal burning Seraphims
Which from their faces dart out fiery light.

[6] These are lines of a marvellous

Digitized by Google

The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state.

X. Cease then, nor order imperfection name:
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.[1]
Know thy own point: this kind, this due degree[2]
Of blindness, weakness, heav'n bestows on thee.
Submit: in this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blessed as thou canst bear;[3]
Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,[4]
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All nature is but art[5] unknown to thee,[6]
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;[7]
All discord, harmony not understood;[8]
All partial evil, universal good;

energy and closeness of expression.—WARTON.

The concluding lines appear to be a false jingle of words which neutralise the whole of Pope's argument. If there is to Providence "no high, no low, no great, no small," the gradation of beings is a delusion. What things are in the sight of God, that they are in reality, and since no one thing in creation is superior or inferior to any other thing, Pope's language throughout this epistle is unmeaning. The final phrase of the couplet is bathos. God is not only the "equal" of "all" his works, he is immeasurably beyond them.

[1] The "order" is the gradation of beings, and "what we blame" is our own rank in the scale of creation, whereas, says Pope, our "proper bliss depends upon it."

[2] MS.:

Cease then, nor order imperfection call
On which depends the happiness of all.
Reason, to think of God when she pretends,
Begins a censor, an adorer ends.
See and confess, this just, this kind degree
Of blindness, etc.

[3] Pope would not express a "sure and certain hope in a blessed resurrection." He used the same equivocal language as his "guide," who had no faith that "another sphere" existed for man. "Let the tranquillity of my mind," said Bolingbroke, Frag. 51, "rest on this immovable rock, that my future, as well as my present state, are ordered by an almighty and all-wise Creator."

[4] MS.:

In the same hand, the same all-plastic pow'r.

[5] "Nature is the art whereby God governs the world," says Hobbes.—WARTON.

Sir T. Browne, Relig. Med. Part i. 16: "In brief all things are artificial; for nature is the art of God."

[6] Art, in the sense of design, is manifest in nature, and has been traced in endless particulars. Pope must mean by "unknown art" the ultimate principles to which the laws of nature owe their efficiency.

[7] From Fontenelle: "Everything is chance, provided we give this name to an order unknown to us."—WARTON.

[8] Feltham's Resolves: "The world is kept in order by discord, and every part of it is but a more particular composed jar. And in all these it makes greatly for the Maker's glory

Digitized by Google

And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,[1]
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

that such an admirable harmony should be produced out of such an infinite discord."—WARTON.

[1] This line ran thus in the first edition:

And spite of pride, and in thy reason's spite,

Pope afterwards, says Johnson, discovered, or was shown, that the "truth" which subsisted "in spite of reason" could not be very "clear."

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE II.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH RESPECT TO HIMSELF, AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

I. The business of man not to pry into God, but to study himself. His middle nature: his powers and frailties, ver. 1 to 19. The limits of his capacity, ver. 19, &c. II. The two principles of man, self-love and reason, both necessary, ver. 53, &c. Self-love the stronger, and why, ver. 67, &c. Their end the same, ver. 81, &c. III. The passions, and their use, ver. 93 to 130. The predominant passion, and its force, ver. 132 to 160. Its necessity, in directing men to different purposes, ver. 165, &c. Its providential use, in fixing our principle, and ascertaining our virtue, ver. 177. IV. Virtue and vice joined in our mixed nature; the limits near, yet the things separate and evident: what is the office of reason, ver. 202 to 216. V. How odious vice in itself, and how we deceive ourselves into it, ver. 217. VI. That, however, the ends of Providence and general good are answered in our passions and imperfections, ver. 238, &c. How usefully these are distributed to all orders of men, ver. 241. How useful they are to society, ver. 251. And to individuals, ver. 268. In every state, and every age of life, ver. 273, &c.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

EPISTLE II.

I. Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,[1]
The proper study of mankind is man.[2]
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,[3]
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,[4]
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,[5]
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;[6]
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;[7]

The business of man not to pry into God, but to study himself. His middle nature, his power, frailties, and the limits of his capacity.

[1] MS.:

Learn we ourselves, not God presume to scan,
But know the study, etc.

[2] Ed. 1.:

The only science of mankind is man.

Ed. 2.:

The proper study, etc.—Pope.

"The true science and true study of man is man," says Charron in his treatise on Wisdom; and Pascal, in his thoughts translated by Dr. Kennet, 1727, p. 248, says, "The study of man is the proper employment and exercise of mankind." But Pascal is maintaining that man should study himself in preference to mathematics, and not to the exclusion of God, which is a doctrine that would have filled him with horror.

[3] From Cowley, who says of life, in his ode on Life and Fame:

Vain, weak-built isthmus, which dost proudly rise
Up betwixt two eternities.—Warton.

[4] Kennet's Pascal, p. 160: "We have an idea of truth, not to be effaced by all the wiles of the sceptic."

[5] The stoic took his stand upon virtue, and with a stern faith in the all-sufficiency of moral excellence he calmly defied the trials of life.

[6] Johnson, in his translation of Crousaz, says he cannot determine whether any one has discovered the true meaning of the words "in doubt to act or rest." The language is vague, and incapable of an interpretation which is generally true; but the probable sense seems to be that man is in doubt whether to embrace an active belief, or whether to resign himself to a passive, inert scepticism.

[7] First edition:

To deem himself a part of God or beast.

Kennet's Pascal, p. 30, furnished the hint for the line: "What, then, is to be the fate of man? Shall he be equal to God, or shall he not be superior to the beasts?"

Digitized by Google

In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;[1]
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,[2]
Whether he thinks too little or too much;[3]
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;[4]
Still by himself abused,[5] or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;[6]
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world![7]
[8]Go, wondrous creature! mount[9] where science guides,
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;

[1] Man is not born only to die, but death has the present life on one side of it, and immortality on the other. Man does not reason only to err, but to establish a multitude of mighty truths.

[2] "Such is the reason of man that he is equally ignorant whether, etc."

[3] From Kennet's Pascal, p. 180: "If we think too little of a thing or too much, our head turns giddy, and we are at a loss to find out our way to truth."

[4] Kennet's Pascal, p. 162: "What a chimæra then is man! What a confused chaos! What a subject of contradiction!"

[5] "Abused" here means "deceived," a sense of the word which was once common. Lord Bacon, Essay on Cunning: "Some build upon the abusing of others, and, as we now say, putting tricks upon them." Bishop Hall, Contemplations upon the New Testament, bk. ii. cont. 6: "Crafty men and lying spirits agreed to abuse the credulous world."

[6] Kennet's Pascal, p. 162: "If he is too aspiring we can lower him; if too mean we can raise him."

[7] From Kennet's Pascal, p. 162: "A professed judge of all things, and yet a feeble worm of the earth; the great depositary and guardian of truth, and yet a mere huddle of uncertainty; the glory and the scandal of the universe."

[8] After ver. 18 in the MS.:

For more perfection than this state can bear
In vain we sigh; heav'n made us as we are.
[If gods we *must* because we *would* be, then
Pray hard ye monkies, and ye may be men.]
As wisely sure a modest ape might aim
To be like man, whose faculties and frame
He sees, he feels, as you or I to be
An angel thing we neither know nor see.
Observe how near he edges on our race;
What human tricks! how risible of face!
"It must be so—why else have I the sense
Of more than monkey charms and excellence?
Why else to walk on two so oft essayed?
And why this ardent longing for a maid?"
So Pug might plead, and call his gods unkind,
Till set on end, and married to his mind.
Go, reas'ning thing! assume the Doctor's chair,
As Plato deep, as Seneca severe:
Fix moral fitness, and to God give rule,
Then drop, etc.—WARBURTON.

The couplet between brackets was omitted by Warburton. There is still another reading in the MS. of the couplet, "Observe how near," etc.

Observe his love of tricks, his laughing face;
An elder brother, too, to human race.

[9] MS.:

Go, reas'ning man, go mount, etc.

Digitized by Google

Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,[1]
Correct old Time,[2] and regulate the sun;[3]
Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;[4]
Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod;
And quitting sense call imitating God;[5]

[1] MS.:

Instruct erratic planets where to run.

[2] Warburton says that the phrase "correct old Timo" refers to Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology of Antient Kingdoms Amended, in which one of the main positions was based upon astronomical science. More probably Pope alluded to the familiar fact of the Gregorian reformation of the calendar by substituting new style for old. The change was adopted towards the close of the sixteenth century through the greater part of Europe, but the old style was retained in England till 1752. By "regulate the sun," Wakefield understands the use of equal mean for unequal apparent time.

[3] Ed. 4, 5.:

Show by what rules the wand'ring planets stray,
Correct old Tim , and teach the sun his way.—Popr.

"Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule," exclaims Pope, ver. 29, and Warburton correctly remarks that the sarcastic summary is "a conclusion from all that had been said before from ver. 18 to this effect." The illustrations which go before should consequently be examples of the wild attempts to show how the world might have been better contrived, and Pope points to such schemes when he says, "*Instruct* the planets in what orbs to run." But he has perplexed his meaning by improperly mixing up with instances of ignorant presumption, those real discoveries in science, which are the result of a patient investigation of God's works, and have no connection with the pretence of "teaching Eternal Wisdom how to rule."

[4] Bolingbroke, Fragment 58: "They soar up on Platonic wings to the first good and the first just." Plato taught that there was a good in itself, a just in itself, a beautiful in itself, etc. These ideas, as he called them, these faultless archetypes of earthly qualities, were not mere abstractions of the mind. They had a real existence, and all that was good, beautiful, and just in this world, was derived from them. The "empyreal sphere" was the outermost of the nine fictitious spheres of the ancients, and is "inhabited," says Cicero in his Vision of Scipio, "by that all-powerful God who controls the other spheres." Pope learned his contempt of Plato from Bolingbroke, who said of him with his usual intemperance, and more than his usual ignorance, that he was the "father of philosophical lying, and treated every subject like a bombast poet, and a mad theologian."

[5] MS.:

And proudly rave of imitating God.

Bolingbroke, Fragment 2: "I dare not use theological familiarity and talk of imitating God." Frag. 4: "I hold it to be worse than absurd to assert that man can imitate God." The Platonists taught that if we would know and imitate God we must withdraw the mind from the things of sense, and contemplate the spiritual and the perfect.

Digitized by Google

As eastern priests in giddy circles run,[1]
And turn their heads to imitate the sun.[2]
Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule[3]—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!
  Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man[4] unfold all nature's law,
Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,[5]
And showed a Newton, as we show an ape.[6]

Pope's object was to ridicule those who thought that the perfections of the Deity were to be the model for the imperfect efforts of man. The notion, he says, is not less preposterous than the Eastern absurdity of twisting in a circle to imitate the apparent revolution of the sun.

[1] MS.:

So Eastern madmen in a circle run.

[2] Plutarch tells us, in his Life of Numa, that the followers of Pythagoras were enjoined to turn themselves round during the performance of their religious worship; and that this circumrotation was intended to imitate the revolution of the world. Pliny, in his Natural History, xxviii. 5, mentions the same practice.—WAKEFIELD.

Pope referred to the sacred dance of the Mahometan monks. "They turn on their left foot," says Thevenot, "like a wind-mill driven by a strong wind," and Lady Mary W. Montagu, who witnessed the ceremony, states that they whirled round with an amazing swiftness for above an hour without any of them showing the least appearance of giddiness, which, she adds, is not to be wondered at when it is considered they are all used to it from their infancy.

[3] MS.:

Of moral fitness fix th' unerring rule.

[4] MS.:

Angels themselves, I grant it, when they saw
One mighty man, etc.

[5] MS.:

Admired an angel in a human shape.

[6] From the Zodiac of Palingenius:

Simia cœlicolum, risusque jocusque deorum est
Tunc homo, cum temerè ingenio confidit, et audet
Abdita naturæ scrutari, arcanaque divum.
—WARTON.

This image gives an air of burlesque to the passage, notwithstanding all that can be said. It is degrading to the subject, to the idea of the "superior beings," and to the character on whom it is meant as a panegyric.—BOWLES.

The author of a Letter to Mr. Pope, 1735, says that the lines on Newton had been "generally admired and repeated." From this praise he justly dissents. Either the angels could not have "admired" Newton in the proper sense of the word, or they could not have "shown him as we show an ape," when he would have appeared a grotesque and ludicrous object. The idea is altogether a poor conceit, and was not worth borrowing. In the MS. an additional couplet followed ver. 34:

Ah, turn the glass! it shows thee all along
As weak in conduct, as in science strong.

Digitized by Google

Could he, whose rules the rapid comet[1] bind,[2]
Describe or fix one movement of his mind?[3]
Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,[4]
Explain his own beginning or his end?[5]
Alas! what wonder![6] man's superior part[7]
Unchecked may rise, and climb from art to art;[8]

[1] Ed. 4: The whirling comet.—POPE.

[2] Ed. 1:

Could he who taught each planet where to roll,
Describe or fix one movement of the soul?
Who marked their points to rise or to descend,
Explain his own beginning or his end?—POPE.

[3] Sir Isaac Newton showed the probability, converted into certainty by later observations, that comets travelled in elongated curves, and were subjected to the identical law of attraction which governed the motions of the planets. The laws of gravitation were the "rules" which "bound" the comets, and Pope contrasts these definite laws of matter with the variable "movements" of the human mind, which cannot be "fixed" or reduced to rule. The mind, however, has also its laws, which, notwithstanding the disturbing force of free-will, are sufficiently understood for the practical purposes of life.

[4] Ed. 4:

Who saw the stars here rise, and here descend?—POPE.

[5] The comparison is pointless. Newton knew far more of his end,—of his mission and ultimate destiny,—than of the purpose and fate of comets, and did not know less of his own beginning than of the origin of the heavenly bodies. Man is incapable of conceiving the mode by which a single atom of the universe was called into being, nor can he penetrate to the essence of a single law or particle of matter any better than to the essence of mind. After ver. 38 there is this couplet in the MS.:

Or more of God, or more of man can find,
Than this that one is good, and one is blind?

There is a kindred antithesis in the last verse of the Epistle, but the exaggeration of the statement is less strongly marked.

[6] "Alas," says Pope, "what wonder" that Newton should be unable to "explain his own beginning and end," since "what reason weaves is undone by passion." But this cannot be the cause of our inability to unfold the creative process, for when passion is not permitted to interfere with reason we make no advance towards an explanation of our "own beginning." Passion does often interfere with the just perception of our proper "end," and with the practice of the duties we perceive, only Pope should have known that to rise superior to passion is the daily discipline of hosts of men. "It seems," says Pascal, "to be the divine intention to perfect the will rather than the understanding," and of the two we can approximate nearer to moral perfection than to universal science.

[7] MS.:

Unchecked may mount thy intellectual part
From whim to whim,—at best from art to art.

[8] MS.:

Joins truth to truth, or mounts
There mounts unchecked, and soars from art to art.

Digitized by Google

But when his own great work is but begun,
What reason weaves, by passion is undone,[1]
Trace science then, with modesty thy guide;
First strip off all her equipage of pride;
Deduct what is but vanity or dress,
Or learning's luxury, or idleness;
Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;
Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts
Of all[2] our vices have created arts;
Then see how little the remaining sum,
Which served the past, and must the times to come![3]

The two principles of man, self-love and reason, both necessary.

II. Two principles in human nature reign;
Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain;[4]
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,
Each works its end to move or govern all:[5]
And to their proper operation still[6]
Ascribe all good; to their improper, ill.

[1] An allusion to the web of Penelope in Homer's Odyssey.—WAKEFIELD.

[2] That is, of all the studies which are dictated by the vices of pride and vanity. He followed Bolingbroke, who wrote long tirades against moralists, divines, and metaphysicians, for indulging, from hope of fame, in barren, chimerical speculations.

[3] This paragraph first appeared in the edition of 1743. In the preceding paragraph, we are told that, in physical science, man "may rise unchecked from art to art." Unless, therefore, Pope reckoned physical science among the worthless departments of knowledge, there was, by his own statement, one vast and important scientific region which was destined to unlimited extension, and of which it was not correct to say that a "little sum" must serve the future, as it had served the past.

[4] MS.:

Two different principles our nature move;
One spurs, one reins; this reason, that self love.

Cicero's Offices, i. 28: "The powers of the mind are twofold; one consists in appetite, by the Greeks called ὁρμὴ (impulse), which hurries man hither and thither; the other in reason, which teaches and explains what we are to do, and what we are to avoid."

[5] The MS. goes on thus:

Of good and evil gods what frighted fools,
Of good and evil, reason puzzled schools,
Deceived, deceiving taught, to these refer;
Know both must operate, or both must err.—WARBURTON.

[6] "Still" is thrust in to supply a rhyme. "Ascribe" is "we ascribe" carried on from "we call" at ver. 55.

Digitized by Google

Self-love, the spring of motion, acts[1] the soul;
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.[2]
Man, but for that, no action could attend,
And, but for this, were active to no end:
Fixed like a plant on his peculiar spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot;[3]
Or, meteor-like, flame lawless through the void,[4]
Destroying others, by himself destroyed.

Most strength the moving principle requires; Self-love the stronger, and why.
Active its task, it prompts, impels, inspires;
Sedate and quiet, the comparing lies,
Formed but to check, delib'rate, and advise.
Self-love still stronger, as its objects nigh:
Reason's at distance, and in prospect lie:[5]
That sees immediate good by present sense;
Reason, the future and the consequence.[6]

[1] "Acts," in the signification of "incites to action" was formerly common. "Most men," says Barrow, "are greatly tainted with self-love; some are wholly possessed and *acted* by it."

[2] MS.:

Self-love the spring of action lends the force;
Reason's comparing balance states the course:
The primal impulse, and controlling weight
To give the motion, and to regulate.

Bolingbroke, Fragment 3, says that "appetite and passion are the spring of human nature; reason the balance to control and regulate it." The image is borrowed from the works of the watch, where the spring is the moving power, and the balance regulates the motion.

[3] Without self-love, that is, man would be like "a plant," and without reason like "a meteor,"—the slave of destructive passions. The first comparison is inconsiderate. The man who had no self-love, which means no moving principle, no affections or desires, would not even "draw nutrition, and propagate." The appetite for food, the sexual appetite, and the care for life, would all be wanting, and he would "rot" at once. Or if reason, without desires, could induce him to foster an existence to which he was totally indifferent, reason might equally impel him to other acts besides the preservation of himself, and the perpetuation of his race.

[4] Meteors may flame lawless through empty space, but man could not be flaming through a "void" when he was "destroying others."

[5] The objects, that is, of reason lie at a distance. MS.:

Self-love yet stronger as its objects near;
Reason's diminished as remote appear.

[6] From Lord Bacon: "The affections carry ever an appetite to good as reason doth. The difference is, that the affection beholdeth merely the present, reason beholdeth the future and sum of time."—RUFFHEAD.

Digitized by Google

Thicker than arguments, temptations throng,
At best more watchful this, but that more strong.
The action of the stronger to suspend,
Reason still use, to reason still attend.
Attention, habit and experience gains;[1]
Each strengthens reason, and self-love restrains.

Their and the same.

Let subtle schoolmen teach these friends to fight,
More studious to divide than to unite;
And grace and virtue,[2] sense[3] and reason split,[4]
With all the rash dexterity of wit.
Wits, just like fools, at war about a name,
Have full as oft no meaning, or the same.[5]
Self-love and reason to one end aspire,
Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire;[6]

"The sensual man," says Crousaz in illustration of the principle, "indulges in the pleasures of a luxurious table regardless of the diseases that may be the consequence of his gluttony, but the reasoner prefers a lasting tranquillity to transient enjoyment."

[1] Bolingbroke, Fragment 6: "Self-love is the original spring of human actions. Experience and observation require time; and reason that collects from them comes slowly to our assistance." Experience enlightens reason by showing us what is hurtful in practice, and what beneficial. Pope's line is badly expressed. "Attention gains habit," for "habits are acquired by attention," is barely English.

[2] MS.: "nature." "Grace" here signifies the Divine assistance vouchsafed to the natural powers of man in his efforts after goodness. Pope's original reading,—"grace and nature"—was a censure of the attempts to define the respective influences exerted by the nature of man, and the grace or intervention of God. The substitute of "virtue" for "nature," obscures the meaning, but the poet apparently had still in his mind the long controversies on the share which appertained to "grace" in the production of "virtue." He may have thought that it was needless to try and settle the precise part which belonged to grace, since nature and grace are both gifts of the same Almighty Being.

[3] Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato divided the faculties into "sense and reason," and the classification passed from the ancients to the schoolmen. "Sense" comprised the five senses, with every act of the mind which was supposed to depend on bodily sensations. Under this head were included the passions and desires, and "sense," in its moral signification, was the equivalent of what Pope calls "self-love."

[4] MS.:

Let metaphysics common reason split.

[5] In the MS. this couplet follows:

Too nice distinctions honest sense will shun,
Know pleasure, good, and happiness are one.

[6] MS.:

Both fly from pain, to pleasure both aspire,
With one aversion, and with one desire.

Digitized by Google

But greedy that, its object would devour,
This taste the honey, and not wound the flow'r:
Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,
Our greatest evil, or our greatest good.

III. Modes of self-love the passions we may call;
'Tis real good, or seeming, moves them all:[1]
But since not ev'ry good we can divide,
And reason bids us for our own provide,
Passions, though selfish, if their means be fair,[2]
List[3] under reason, and deserve her care;
Those, that imparted, court[4] a nobler aim,
Exalt their kind, and take some virtue's name.[5]

The passions and their use.

Pope charges the schoolmen with being at war about a name when they distinguished between "sense" and "reason," and the distinction is a capital article in his own moral creed. He charges them with maintaining that sense and reason were not merely separate, but contending powers, and he too has insisted on the universality of the strife. "Sense," or, in his language, "self-love," "looks," ver. 73, to "immediate," "reason" to "future good," and in this difference of view the "temptations" of self-love "throng thicker than the arguments" of reason. The contest is the subject of a long disquisition further on, and Pope laments, ver. 149—160, that passion should conquer in the fight. When he interjected the paragraph, in which he contradicted himself, he rested his case on the proposition that reason, which pursues interest well-understood, and self-love, which gratifies present passion, "aspire to one end, — pleasure." But the pleasure sought by reason and self-love respectively is not the same pleasure, and so incompatible were the two pleasures in his estimation that he calls one, ver. 92, "our greatest evil," the other "our greatest good."

[1] MS.:

Reason itself more nicely shares in all.

[2] MS.:

Passions whose ends are honest, means are fair.

[3] "List," which would probably now be thought a vulgarism, was in Pope's day the established word. Our form, "enlist," was apparently unknown to Johnson, who did not insert it in his Dictionary.

[4] "Passions that court an aim" is surely a strange expression. — WARTON.

For "court" Pope had at first written "boast."

[5] The "imparted" or sympathetic passions are the benevolent impulses and affections. As to their "kind," or nature, they are, says Pope, "modes of self-love," but when the self-love assumes the form of loving others the passion is "exalted, and takes the name of some virtue." He passes the affections over here with this slight allusion, and returns to them at ver. 255, and more at length in Epistle iii.

Digitized by Google

In lazy apathy let stoics boast
Their virtue fixed;[1] 'tis fixed as in a frost;[2]
Contracted all, retiring to the breast;[3]
But strength of mind is exercise, not rest:[4]
The rising tempest puts in act the soul,[5]
Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.[6]
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,[7]
Reason the card,[8] but passion is the gale;[9]
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storms, and walks upon the wind.[10]

[1] What says old Epictetus, who knew stoicism better than these men? "I am not to be apathetic or void of passions, like a statue. I am to discharge all the relations of a social and friendly life,—the parent, the husband, the brother, the magistrate." The stoic apathy was no more than a freedom from irrational and excessive agitations of the soul. —JAMES HARRIS.

[2] That is, in cold insensibility. Lady Chudleigh's dialogue on the death of her daughter:

Honour is ever the reward of pain;
A lazy virtue no applause will gain.
—WAKEFIELD.

[3] The stoic aimed at inner perfection, and trusted to the serenity of virtue to sustain him in all the trials of life. Pope erroneously imagined that stoics were selfish and inactive because they were calm and self-contained. Seneca, De Ot. i. 4, says, they insisted that we must never cease labouring for the common good, and Cicero, De Fin. iii. 19, says they placed their force of character at the service of mankind, and thought it their duty to live, and if need were to die, for the benefit of the public.

[4] A couplet is added in the MS.:

Virtue dispassioned naked meets the fight,
Comes without arms, and conquers but by flight.

[5] MS.:

Passions like tempests put in act the soul.

[6] Spectator, June 18, 1712. No. 408: "Passions are to the mind as winds to a ship; they only can move it, and they too often destroy it. Reason must then take the place of pilot, and can never fail of securing her charge if she be not wanting to herself."

[7] Tate's paraphrase from Simonides, Dryden's Miscellanies, vol. v. p. 55:

On life's wide ocean diversely launched out,
Our minds alike are tossed on waves of doubt,
Holding no steady course, or constant sail,
But shift and tack with ev'ry veering gale.—WAKEFIELD.

[8] In the mariner's compass the paper on which the points of the compass are marked is called "the card."

[9] Carew's Poems:

A troop of deities came down to guide
Our steerless barks in passion's swelling tide,
By virtue's card.—WAKEFIELD.

After ver. 108 in the MS.:

A tedious voyage! where how useless lies
The compass, if no pow'rful gusts arise!
—WARBURTON.

[10] Psalm civ. 3: "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, and walketh upon the wings of the wind."—BOWLES.

Digitized by Google

Passions, like elements, though born to fight,
Yet, mixed and softened, in his work unite:[1]
These, 'tis enough to temper and employ;
But what composes man, can man destroy?[2]
Suffice that reason keep to nature's road,
Subject, compound them, follow her and God.[3]
Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasure's smiling train,
Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain,[4]
These mixed with art,[5] and to due bounds confined,
Make and maintain the balance of the mind:
The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife[6]
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes;
And when in act they cease, in prospect rise:

The predominant passion and its force.

Dryden's Ceyx and Alcyone:

And now sublime she rides upon the wind. —WARTON.

Pope held that "fierce ambition" was instigated by the Almighty, Epist. i. ver. 159, and compared his inspiration of such tumultuous passions to his "heaving old ocean, and winging the storm." The poet must be understood as upholding the same extended and licentious doctrine when he returns to the comparison, and talks of "God mounting the storm" of the passions, and "walking upon the wind."

[1] After ver. 112 in the MS.:

The soft, reward the virtuous or invite;
The fierce, the vicious punish or affright.—WARBURTON.

[2] How, that is, can the stoic succeed in destroying passions which enter into the very composition of man? The stoic made no such pretension. What he laboured to "destroy" were those "perturbations of mind" which Zeno, Tusc. iv. 6, maintained to be "repugnant to reason, and against nature," and for which the stoical remedy, Tusc. iv. 28, was the demonstration that they "were vicious, and had nothing natural or necessary in them." The principle for which Pope contended was the very maxim of the stoics,—they insisted that "reason should keep to nature's road." The real question was, whether they did not sometimes go too far, and condemn natural emotions under the name of prohibited perturbations.

[3] All he means is, that the intentions of God are manifested in the nature of man.

[4] Dryden, State of Innocence, Act v.:

With all the num'rous family of death.

Garth, Dispensary, vi. 138:

And all the faded family of care.—WAKEFIELD.

[5] Warton remarks that the group of allegorical personages are here suddenly changed to things which are to be "mixed with art."

[6] MS.:

To blend them well, and harmonise their strife
Makes all etc.

Digitized by Google

Present to grasp, and future still to find,[1]
The whole employ of body and of mind.[2]
All spread their charms, but charm not all alike;
On diff'rent senses diff'rent objects strike;[3]
Hence diff'rent passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak the organs of the frame;[4]
And hence one master passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.[5]
As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
So, cast and mingled with his very frame,[6]
The mind's disease, its ruling passion, came;
Each vital humour which should feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul:
Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.[7]

[1] In plain prose thus: "To grasp present pleasures and to find future pleasures is the whole employ of body and mind." Pope's line is rendered intolerable by its elliptical and inverted language, and the unmeaning expletive "still."

[2] MS.:

Present to seize, or future to obtain
The whole employ of body and of brain.

[3] MS.:

On stronger senses stronger passions strike.

[4] MS.:

Hence passions rise, and more or less inflame,
Proportioned to each organ of the frame,
Nor here internal faculties control,
Nor soul on body acts, but that on soul.

Pope derived the notion from Mandeville, who says that the diversity of passions in different men "depend only upon the different frame,—the inward formation of either the solids or the fluids." According to Pope the strongest organ gives rise to some passion of corresponding strength, which finally absorbs all other passions.

[5] The use of this doctrine, as applied to the knowledge of mankind, is one of the subjects of the second book.—POPE.

Pope refers to Moral Essays, Epist. 1. Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men.

[6] The metaphor is taken from the casting of metal. The "mind's disease," says Pope, is in the original casting, and is not a defect which arises subsequently.

[7] Dryden's Juvenal, Sat. x. 489:

One, with cruel art,
Makes Colon suffer for the peccant part.
WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Nature its mother, habit is its nurse;
Wit, spirit, faculties,[1] but make it worse;
Reason itself but gives it edge and pow'r;[2]
As heav'n's bless'd beam turns vinegar more sour.[3]
We, wretched subjects, though to lawful sway,[4]
In this weak queen some fav'rite still obey;
Ah! if she lend not arms as well as rules,
What can she more[5] than tell us we are fools?
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,
A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend!
Or from a judge turn pleader, to persuade
The choice we make, or justify it made;[6]
Proud of an easy conquest all along,
She but removes weak passions for the strong.[7]
So when small humours gather to a gout,
The doctor fancies he has driv'n them out.[8]
Yes, nature's road must ever be preferred;
Reason is here no guide, but still a guard;

[1] The "faculties" are not a class of powers distinct from "wit, spirit, reason," but these last are among the faculties, and we must understand the passage as if Pope had written that wit and spirit, with all the other faculties, including reason itself, contribute to the growth of the ruling passion.

[2] By inventing arguments in its justification, as Pope explains at ver. 156.

[3] Taken from Bacon, De Calore.—WARTON.

This comparison, which might be very proper in philosophy, has a mean effect in poetry.—BOWLES.

In the MS. this couplet is added:

Its own best forces lead the mind astray,
Just as with Teague his own legs ran away.

Two lines, which do not appear in the subsequent editions, were inserted after ver. 148 in the quarto of 1735:

The ruling passion, be it what it will,
The ruling passion conquers reason still.

[4] MS.:

And we who vainly boast her rightful sway
In our weak etc.

[5] M.S.:

Can reason more etc.

[6] From La Rochefoucauld: "Reason frequently puts itself on the side of the strongest passion; there is no violent passion which has not its reason to justify it."—WARTON.

[7] Pope copied Mandeville: "Man's strong habits and inclinations can only be subdued by passions of greater violence."

[8] Cowley's poem on the late civil war:

The plague, we know, drives all diseases out.—WAKEFIELD.

Ruffhead and Bowles unite in condemning the colloquial familiarity of Pope's simile.

Digitized by Google

'Tis hers to rectify, not overthrow,
And treat this passion more as friend than foe:
Its necessity in directing men to different purposes.
A mightier pow'r the strong direction sends,[1]
And sev'ral men impels to sev'ral ends:[2]
Like varying winds, by other passions tossed,
This drives them constant to a certain coast.[3]
Let pow'r or knowledge, gold or glory, please,
Or (oft more strong than all) the love of ease;[4]
Through life 'tis followed, ev'en at life's expence;
The merchant's toil, the sage's indolence,
The monk's humility, the hero's pride,
All, all alike find reason on their side.
Its providential use in fixing our principle, and ascertaining our virtue.
Th' Eternal Art, educing good from ill,[5]
Grafts on this passion our best principle:
'Tis thus the mercury of man is fixed,[6]
Strong grows the virtue with his nature mixed;
The dross cements what else were too refined,
And in one int'rest body acts with mind.
As fruits, ungrateful to the planter's care,
On savage stocks inserted learn to bear,[7]

[1] MS.:

This bias nature to our temper lends.

The couplet was not in the first edition.

[2] The particular application of this to the several pursuits of men, and the general good resulting thence, falls also into the succeeding book.—POPE.

The "succeeding book" is the Moral Essays, which are almost entirely made up of satiric sketches. Pope dilated upon the evil resulting from "the mind's disease, the ruling passion," but barely touched upon "the general good."

[3] Man can only be driven from passion to passion during the infancy of the ruling passion, which continues to grow, Pope tells us, till it has overspread the entire mind, and obliterated every subordinate desire.

[4] From Rochefoucauld, Maxim 266: "It is a mistake to believe that none but the violent passions, such as ambition and love, are able to triumph over the other passions. Laziness, languid as it is, often gets the mastery of them all, usurps over all the designs and actions of life, and insensibly consumes and destroys both passions and virtues."—WARTON.

[5] MS.:

Th' Eternal Art that mingles good with ill.

[6] Caryll's Hypocrite in Dryden's Miscellanies, iv. p. 312:

Hypocrisy at last should enter in,
And fix this floating mercury of sin.—WAKEFIELD.

[7] MS.:

The noblest fruits the planter's hope may mock,
Which thrive inserted on the savage stock.

Digitized by Google

The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,[1]
Wild nature's vigour working at the root.[2]
What crops of wit and honesty appear
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate or fear![3]
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply;[4]
Ev'n av'rice, prudence; sloth, philosophy;
Lust, through some certain strainers well refined,
Is gentle love, and charms all womankind;
Envy, to which th' ignoble mind's a slave,
Is emulation in the learn'd or brave;[5]

[1] He argues that our primitive tendencies are too various to be steady. Man is mercurial and fickle till his numerous passions are lost in the ruling passion, which converts our changeable propensities into a single desire. Under the government of reason this "savage" and vicious "stock" sends forth a healthy shoot of virtue which is rendered strong and stable by the vigour of the ruling passion, or parent stem. The theory is wrong throughout. People are not composed of only one passion, virtue cannot be the product of a vice, and the simulated virtue which proceeds from a solitary passion will be as contracted as its cause. Pope's catalogue of the ruling passions, and their attendant virtues, exhibits a counterfeit dismembered virtue,—a single false limb in the place of a complete and living body. An unmaimed virtue requires the cultivation of our nature in its complexity, and virtues are grafted on lawful tendencies, and not on lawless passions.

[2] Ver. 184 is followed by this couplet in the MS.:

As dulcet pippins from the crabtree come,
As sloes' rough juices melt into a plum.

[3] Pope probably alluded to Swift when he spoke of the "crops of wit and honesty" which were the product of "spleen, obstinacy, and hate." The spleen and hate engendered wit by prompting satiric effusions; but wit is not in itself a virtue, and when Pope inserted it in his catalogue he must have been thinking of the moral ends it might subserve.

[4] MS.:

Vain-glory, courage, justice can supply.

[5] MS.:

Envy, in critics and old maids the devil,
Is emulation in the learn'd and civil

"Emulation," says Bishop Butler, "is merely the desire of equality with, or superiority over others, with whom we compare ourselves. To desire the attainment of this equality, or superiority, by the particular means of others being brought down to our level, or below it, is, I think, the distinct notion of envy." A man who was made up of rivalry, which is Pope's supposition, would be an odious character, even without the additional taint of envy, from which, nevertheless, he could hardly be free.

Digitized by Google

Nor virtue, male or female, can we name,
But what will grow on pride,[1] or grow on shame.[2]
Virtue and vice joined in our mixed nature; [3]Thus nature gives us (let it check our pride)[4] 195
The virtue nearest to our vice allied;[5]

[1] Pope speaks after Mandeville, who says that shame and pride are the "two passions in which the seeds of most virtues are contained." Pride he defined to be the faculty by which men overvalued themselves, and were led to do what would win them applause. "There is not," he says, "a duty to others or ourselves that may not be counterfeited by it." No quality, he admits, is more detested, and it would defeat its own end if it did not disguise itself in the garb of virtue.

[2] As Pope supposes shame to be "a disease of the mind," he could not apply the term to the self-reproaches of an enlightened conscience, but must mean the humiliation produced by censure. This species of shame can only bind us to average decency of conduct, is a feeble protection against secret vice, and often an incentive to baseness. Spurious shame, as Mandeville remarks, induces women to murder their illegitimate children, drives many to tell falsehoods to conceal their faults, changes with the company and public opinion, and begets a degrading compliance with the evil habits of associates, and with the lax customs of the age.

[3] After ver. 194 in the MS.:

How oft with passion, virtue points her charms!
Then shines the hero, then the patriot warms.
Peleus' great son, or Brutus who had known
Had Lucrece been a whore, or Helen none?
But virtues opposite to make agree,
That, reason, is thy task, and worthy thee.
Hard task, cries Bibulus, and reason weak.
"Make it a point, dear Marquess, or a pique.
Once for a whim, persuade yourself to pay
A debt to reason, like a debt at play.
For right or wrong have mortals suffered more?
B[lount] for his prince, or B$_{**}$ for his whore?
Whose self-denials nature most control?
His who would save a sixpence, or his soul.
Web for his health, a Chartreux for his sin,
Contend they not which soonest shall grow thin?
What we resolve we can: but here's the fault,
We ne'er resolve to do the thing we ought."
—WARBURTON.

There is another version of the last couplet but one in the MS.:

Which will become more exemplary thin,
W[eb] for his health, De Rancé for his sin?

Web may have been the General Webb who got considerable reputation for his defeat of the French at Wynendale in 1708. Swift in his Journal to Stella, April 19, 1711, speaks of him as "going with a crutch and a stick." Rancé was born at Paris in 1626, and died in 1700. In 1662 he assumed the government of the monastery of La Trappe, and was noted for the austerities he imposed and practised. Mr. Croker thinks that "B." who "suffered for his prince" was Edward Blount, the Roman Catholic Devonshire squire. He went into voluntary exile after the rebellion of 1715, but did not remain abroad many years.

[4] Yet in the previous couplet we are informed that there is hardly a virtue which will not grow on the "pride" we are here enjoined to "check."

[5] MS.:

Thus every ruling passion of the mind
Stands to some virtue and some vice inclined.

Digitized by Google

the limits near, yet the things separate and evident. The office of reason.

Reason the bias turns to good from ill,[1]
And Nero reigns a Titus if he will.[2]
The fiery soul abhorred in Catiline,
In Decius charms, in Curtius is divine:[3]
The same ambition can destroy or save,
And makes a patriot as it makes a knave.[4]
This light and darkness in our chaos joined,
What shall divide? The god within the mind.[5]
Extremes in nature equal ends produce,
In man they join to some mysterious use;[6]
Though each by turns the other's bound invade,
As, in some well-wrought picture, light and shade,[7]

[1] The MS. has two other versions of this line:

Check but its force or compass short of ill.
Turn but the bias from the side of ill.

[2] But not by grafting temperance and humanity upon his ruling passions—sensuality and cruelty. He must have torn up his evil passions by the roots, and cultivated virtues in their stead.

[3] Catiline hemmed in by superior forces died fighting with the courage of despair. Unless he was greatly maligned his conspiracies were prompted by profligate selfishness without any mixture of patriotism. Decius, instructed by a vision on the eve of the battle of Vesuvius, B.C. 340, that the general on the one side, and the army on the other was doomed, rushed into the thick of the fight to ensure by his own death the destruction of the enemy. The story of Decius may be fabulous, like that of Pope's next example, Curtius, who when informed, B.C. 362, that a chasm which had opened in the Roman forum could never be filled up till the basis of the Roman greatness had been committed to it, was alleged to have mounted on horseback clad in armour, and to have leaped into the gulf. Courage, the quality common to Catiline, Decius, and Curtius, is never a ruling passion, but is the effect of some antecedent motive, which may be vanity or duty, lofty patriotism or criminal ambition.

[4] MS.:

And either makes a patriot or a knave.

[5] MS.:

Divide, before the genius of the mind.

or,

'Tis reason's task to sep'rate in the mind.

The idea expressed in the couplet is an adaptation of a passage in the first chapter of Genesis. As God in the chaos of the world "divided the light from the darkness," so the God within us, which is our reason, does the same with the chaos of the mind. The chaos, on Pope's system, was in the actions, and not in the motives. The sweet water and the bitter flowed from the same tainted fountain,—from ambition, pride, sloth, etc.

[6] MS.:

Extremes in man concur to gen'ral use.

Pope's meaning seems to be that in all terrestrial things, except man, extremes or contraries produce opposite and uncompounded effects. In man, extremes, in the shape of virtue and vice, join and mix together. There is no force in the distinction. Hot water, for instance, mixes with cold, and a mean temperature is the result.

[7] "Great purposes," says War-

Digitized by Google

And oft so mix, the diff'rence is too nice[1]
Where ends the virtue, or begins the vice.
Fools! who from hence into the notion fall,
That vice or virtue there is none at all.
If white and black blend, soften, and unite
A thousand ways, is there no black or white?[2]
Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain;
'Tis to mistake them costs the time and pain.[3]

burton in explanation of this passage, "are served by vice and virtue invading each other's bounds, no less than the perfecting the constitution of the whole, as lights and shades, in a well wrought picture, make the harmony and spirit of the composition." By this rule virtue dashed with vice is more "spirited and harmonious" than virtue without alloy. Warburton allowed himself to be deluded by a metaphor. Black paint has no resemblance to black morals,—shadows in a picture to hatred, avarice, and so on.

[1] Too nice, that is, to permit us to distinguish where ends, etc. The ellipse goes beyond any poetical licence which is consistent with writing English.

[2] The lines from ver. 207 to 214 are versified from Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, 10th ed., p. 184: "As in painting two very different colours may, from the highest intenseness in either extreme, terminate in the midst insensibly, so that it shall not be possible to determine exactly where the one ends, and the other begins, and yet the colours may differ as much as can be, not in degree only but in kind, so, though it may, perhaps, be very difficult in some nice cases to define exactly the bounds of right and wrong, yet right and wrong are totally different, even altogether as much as white and black, light and darkness." The argument of Clarke was directed against Hobbes, and his disciples, who denied that there was any inherent difference between good and evil, and supported their paradox by pleading the impossibility of drawing a line between the two.

[3] Here follows in the MS.:

To strangle in its birth each rising crime
Requires but little,—just to think in time.
In ev'ry vice, at first, in some degree
We see some virtue, or we think we see.
Our vices thus are virtues in disguise,
Wicked but by degrees, or by surprise.

Of the last couplet there is a second version:

Thus spite of all the Frenchman's witty lies
Most vices are but virtues in disguise.

The witty Frenchman was La Rochefoucauld. Pope's counter-maxim is only a form of La Rochefoucald's principle, converted into an apparent contradiction by an equivocal use of the phrase "virtues in disguise." Those who pursue vicious objects are reluctant to allow that they are the slaves of vice. "Hence," says Hutcheson, in a passage quoted by Warton, "the basest actions are dressed in some tolerable mask. What others call avarice, appears to the agent a prudent care of a family or friends; fraud, artful conduct; malice and revenge, a just sense of honour; fire and sword and desolation among enemies, a just defence of our country; persecution, a zeal for truth." Pope assumes that the vice is inspired by genuine virtue, whereas the virtue is

Digitized by Google

Vice odious in itself and how we deceive ourselves into it.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;[1]
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity,[2] then embrace.[3]
But where th' extreme of vice, was ne'er agreed:
Ask where's the North? at York, 'tis on the Tweed;
In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there,
At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where.
No creature owns it in the first degree,
But thinks his neighbour farther gone than he;[4]

a pretence, a flimsy pretext to excuse wrong-doing. The vice is real, the virtue fictitious, and this is the principle of La Rochefoucauld.

[1] Dryden's Hind and Panther, Part i.:

For truth has such a face and such a mien,
As to be loved needs only to be seen.—
WAKEFIELD.

The lines from ver. 217 to 221 are thus varied in the MS.:

Vice all abhor, the monster is too foul;
Naked, indeed, she shocks us to the soul;
But dressed too well, with tempting time and place,
That but to pity her is to embrace.
Where art thou, Vice? 'twas never yet agreed, etc.

[2] The word is inappropriate. Men do not become sensual out of pity to the miseries of sensuality, or envious from compassion for the pangs of envy. Pity may be felt for the evils which vice entails, but this is not pity for the vice, nor a temptation to practise it.

[3] After ver. 220 in ed. 1:

A cheat, a whore, who starts not at the name,
In all the Inns of Court, or Drury Lane?

These two omitted in the subsequent editions.—POPE.

The dishonest lawyer, and woman of the town, applied soft names to their vices, and were startled to be called by their proper appellations.

The couplet was followed in the MS. by some further illustrations:—

B[lun]t but does
K— brings matters on;
Rogues but do business; spies but serve the crown;
Sid has the secret, Chartres
H[o]r[ve]y the court, and Huggins knows the town;
Kind-hearted Peter helps the rich in want,
Nero's a wag, and Messaline gallant.

The last couplet assumed a second form:

Nero's a wag, Faustina some suspect
Of gallantry, and Sutton of neglect.

Sutton, Peter Walter, Hervey, Huggins, Chartres, and Blunt will reappear in connection with the offences for which they are satirised here. Sid was Lord Godophin, who was lampooned under the name of Sid Hamet by Swift. Pope, in his Moral Essays, Epist. 1, ver 86, speaks of his

Newmarket fame, and judgment in a bet;

and the phrase, "Sid has the secret" is an insinuation that his "judgment in a bet" sometimes arose from his being privy to the tricks of the turf.

[4] After ver. 226 in the MS.:

The Col'nel swears the agent is a dog;
The scriv'ner vows th' attorney is a rogue,
Against the thief th' attorney loud inveighs,
For whose ten pound the county twenty pays;
The thief damns judges, and the knaves of state,
And dying mourns small villains hanged by great.—WARBURTON.

Digitized by Google

Ev'n those who dwell beneath its very zone,[1]
Or never feel the rage, or never own;[2]
What happier natures shrink at with affright,
The hard inhabitant contends is right.[3]

The ends of Providence, and general good, answered in our passions and imperfections. How usefully these are distributed to all orders of men.

Virtuous and vicious ev'ry man must be,
Few in th' extreme, but all in the degree:[4]
The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise;
And ev'n the best, by fits, what they despise.[5]
'Tis but by parts we follow good or ill;
For, vice or virtue, self directs it still;[6]
Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal;
But heav'n's great view is one, and that the whole.
That counterworks each folly and caprice;
That disappoints th' effect of ev'ry vice;[7]

The agent of whom the Colonel complained was the army agent. The scrivener, who drew contracts, and invested money, hated the attorneys because they were in part competitors for the same class of business. Boswell, in his Life of Johnson, says, that Mr. Ellis, who died in 1791, aged 93, was the last of the scriveners. Their occupation had gradually lapsed to other professions, legal or monetary. Pope's remaining instances are forced. The attorney did not pay more than his neighbours to the county expenditure for prosecuting thieves, and as the trials were much to his own profit, he was the last person who had an interest in inveighing against thievery. As little did the thief at his execution denounce "the knaves of state," of whom he commonly knew nothing. Pope has put the satire of the Beggar's Opera into the mouth of the veritable pick-pockets and highwaymen.

[1] MS.:

Ev'n those who dwell in Vice's very zone.

[2] From moral insensibility, that is, they are either unconscious of their vice, or, being conscious, pretend ignorance.

[3] Pope goes too far. The worst men acknowledge that some things are crimes.

[4] Addison, Spectator, No. 183: "There was no person so vicious who had not some good in him, nor any person so virtuous who had not in him some evil."

[5] This couplet follows ver. 234 in the MS.:

Some virtue in a lawyer has been known,
Nay in a minister, or on a throne.

[6] Complete virtue, and complete vice, says Pope, are both hostile to self-interest, a plain confession that his selfish system was incompatible with thorough virtue. He assures us, Epist. iv. ver. 310, that "virtue alone is happiness below," but to be consistent he must have meant virtue seasoned with vice.

[7] He is far from saying that good effects naturally rise from vice or folly, and affirms nothing but that God superintends the world in such a manner that they do not produce all those destructive consequences that

Digitized by Google

That, happy frailties to all ranks applied,[1]
Shame to the virgin,[2] to the matron pride,
Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,
To kings presumption, and to crowds belief:
That virtue's ends from vanity can raise,
Which seeks no interest, no reward but praise;[3]
And build[4] on wants, and on defects of mind,
The joy, the peace, the glory of mankind.

How useful these are to society in general:

Heav'n forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally
The common int'rest, or endear the tie.
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here;[5]
Yet from the same we learn, in its decline,
Those joys, those loves, those int'rests to resign:[6]

might reasonably be expected from them.—JOHNSON.

MS.:

That draws a virtue out of ev'ry vice.

Or,

And public good extracts from private vice.

The last version is taken from the title of Mandeville's work, "The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits." Johnson's interpretation of the text does not agree with Pope's assertion, that "imperfections are usefully distributed to all orders of men."

[1] MS.:

Each frailty wisely to each rank applied.

The line is disfigured by the clumsy transition from the present tense to the past for the sake of the rhyme, which is a trifle in comparison with the doctrine that "heaven applies happy frailties to all ranks." If the "frailties" specified by Pope are "happy," fear must be a recommendation in a statesman, rashness in a general, presumption in a king, and a credulous faith in the presumption the best condition for the people.

[2] The sense of shame in virgins is not a frailty to be ranked with pride, rashness, and presumption.

[3] There is another side to the picture. The ends of vice are also raised from vanity, which begets wastefulness, debt, slander, and a multitude of evils.

[4] That is, "heaven can build," the "can" being supplied from "can raise," ver. 245.

[5] Shaftesbury's Moralists: "Is not both conjugal affection and natural affection to parents, love of a common city, community, or country, with the other duties and social parts of life, founded in these very wants?"—WARTON.

[6] Men, says Pope, are reconciled to death from growing weary of the

Digitized by Google

Taught half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death, and calmly pass away.

And to individuals in particular in every state:

Whate'er the passion,—knowledge, fame, or pelf,—
Not one will change his neighbour with himself.[1]
The learn'd is happy nature to explore,[2]
The fool is happy that he knows no more;
The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
The poor contents him with the care of heav'n.
See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing,
The sot a hero, lunatic a king;
The starving chemist in his golden views
Supremely blessed,[3] the poet in his muse.[4]

And in every age of life.

See some strange comfort ev'ry state attend,
And pride bestowed on all, a common friend:[5]
See some fit passion ev'ry age supply,
Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.[6]

"wants, frailties, and passions" of life. "The observation," says Warburton, "is new, and would in any place be extremely beautiful, but has here an *infinite* grace and propriety." This is one of the stock forms of Warburton's adulation. Pope's remark was stale, and from the nature of the case could not be new if, as he asserted, it was generally true, since all men in their declining years could not, through all time, have left unexpressed the feeling which made them all willing to die. What all men think many men will say.

[1] The MS. adds this couplet:

What partly pleases, totally will shock;
Nor Ross would be Argyle, nor Toland
I question much if Toland would be Locke.

The Duke of Argyle and General Ross were both soldiers, both politicians, and both Scotchmen. Ross was a member of the House of Commons. Toland introduced metaphysics into his infidel works, and Pope signifies by his couplet that the inferior in a particular department would not desire on the whole to change characters with a superior in the same department.

[2] MS.:

The learn'd are blessed such wonders to explore.

[3] Buoyed up by the expectation that he would hit upon the secret of transmuting the baser metals into gold.

[4] MS.:

The chemist's happy in his golden views,
Payn in his madness, Welstod in his muse.

[5] From La Rochefoucauld, Maxim 36: "Nature seems to have bestowed pride on us, on purpose to save us the pain of knowing our own imperfections."—WARTON.

[6] Bolingbroke, Frag. 50: "Hope, that cordial drop, which sweetens every bitter potion, even the last."—WAKEFIELD.

MS.:

With ev'ry age of man new passions rise,
Hope travels through nor quits him when he dies.

Digitized by Google

Behold the child, by nature's kindly law[1] 275
Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw:
Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
A little louder,[2] but as empty quite:
Scarfs, garters,[3] gold, amuse his riper stage,[4]
And beads[5] and pray'r-books are the toys of age: 280
Pleased with this bauble still, as that before;
Till tired he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er.[6]
Mean while[7] opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days;[8]

[1] The lines, ver. 275—282, first appeared in the edition of 1743. They were evidently suggested by a passage in Garth's Dispensary, Canto v.:

Children at toys as men at titles aim,
And in effect both covet but the same,
This Philip's son proved in revolving years,
And first for rattles, then for worlds shed tears.

[2] When Pope used the phrase "a little louder," he was thinking of the "rattle," and forgot the "straw."

[3] The "garters" refer to the badge of the order of the garter. "Scarf," in the sense of a badge of honour, was in Pope's day appropriated to the nobleman's chaplain. "His sister," says Swift, speaking of a clerical time-server in his Essay on the Fates of Clergymen, "procured him a scarf from my lord." Addison in the Spectator, No. 21, compares bishops, deans, and archdeacons to generals; doctors of divinity, prebendaries, and "all that wear scarves" to field-officers; and the rest of the clergy to subalterns. "There has been," he says, "a great exceeding of late years in the second division, several brevets having been granted for the converting of subalterns into scarf-officers, insomuch that within my memory the price of lute-string"—the material of which the scarf was made—"is raised above twopence in a yard." The number of chaplains a nobleman could "qualify" varied with his rank. A duke might nominate six, a baron three. The distinction, when Pope wrote his Essay, was too slight to be fitly classed with orders of knighthood.

[4] The infant's pleasure in trifles may be the kindly work of nature providing for the enjoyments of an age incapable of better things; but the maturer delight in the "scarfs, garters, gold," is not the work of nature, but of folly. The first is a harmless instinct; the other a culpable vanity.—CROLY.

[5] Small balls of glass or pearl, or other substance, strung upon a thread, and used by the Romanists to count their prayers; from whence the phrase "to tell beads," or to be at one's "beads," is, to be at prayer.—JOHNSON.

[6] MS.:

At last he sleeps, and all the care is o'er.

[7] MS: "Till then."

[8] MS.:

Observant then, how from defects of mind
Spring half the bliss, or rest of human-kind!
How pride rebuilds what reason can destroy,
&c.

Digitized by Google

Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense by pride:[1]
These build as fast as knowledge can destroy;[2]
In folly's cup still laughs the bubble, joy;
One prospect lost, another still we gain;[3]
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain;[4]
Ev'n mean self-love becomes, by force divine,
The scale to measure others' wants by thine.[5]
See, and confess, one comfort still must rise;[6]
'Tis this, though man's a fool, yet God is wise![7]

[1] MS.:

Of certainty by faith, of sense by pride.

[2] MS.:

These still repair what wisdom would destroy.

[3] MS.:

Through life's long dream new prospects entertain.

[4] MS.:

Life's prospects alter ev'ry step we gain,
And Nature gives no vanity in vain.

[5] See further of the use of this principle in man, Epist. 3, ver. 121, 124, 133, 143, 199, etc., 269, etc., 316, etc. And Epist. 4, ver. 353 and 363.—POPE.

[6] MS:

Confess one comfort ever will arise.

[7] Bolingbroke, Fragment 53: "God is wise and man a fool."

Digitized by Google

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE III.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH RESPECT TO SOCIETY.

I. The whole universe one system of society, ver. 7, &c. Nothing made wholly for itself, nor yet wholly for another, ver. 27. The happiness of animals mutual, ver. 49. II. Reason or instinct operate alike to the good of each individual, ver. 79. III. Reason or instinct operate also to society in all animals, ver. 109. How far society carried by instinct, ver. 115. How much farther by reason, ver. 131. IV. Of that which is called the state of nature, ver. 144. Reason instructed by instinct in the invention of arts, ver. 169, and in the forms of society, ver. 179. V. Origin of political societies, ver. 199. Origin of monarchy, ver. 207. VI. Patriarchal government, ver. 215. Origin of true religion and government, from the same principle of love, 231, &c. Origin of superstition and tyranny, from the same principle of fear, ver. 241, &c. The influence of self-love operating to the social and public good, ver. 269. Restoration of true religion and government on their first principle, ver. 283. Mixed government, ver. 288. Various forms of each, and the true end of all, ver. 303, &c.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

EPISTLE III.

I. Here then we rest: "The Universal Cause
Acts to one end,[2] but acts by various laws."[3]
In all the madness of superfluous health,
The trim of pride, the impudence of wealth,[4]
Let this great truth be present night and day:
But most be present if we preach or pray.
Look round our world, behold the chain of love[5]
Combining all below and all above.
See plastic nature working to this end,[6]
The single atoms each to other tend,
Attract, attracted to, the next in place
Formed and impelled its neighbour to embrace.[7]

The whole universe one system of society.

[1] In several editions in quarto,

Learn, Dulness, learn! "The Universal Cause," etc.—Warburton.

[2] The "one end" is the good of the whole.

[3] MS.:

Must act by gen'ral not by partial laws.

[4] That is, those who are rich in temporal blessings should remember that the world is not made for them alone.

[5] MS.:

Look nature through, and see the chain of love.

[6] Ed. 1.:

See lifeless matter moving to one end.—Pope.

"Plastic," or as Bolingbroke called it, "fashioning nature," was in its etymological and popular sense, the power in nature which gave things their shape or figure. This seems to be the meaning in Pope. The philosophic sense of the phrase was more extensive. The laws of matter may have been made self-acting, or they may be maintained by the direct and constant interposition of God. Cudworth, and some other writers, who held the first of these opinions, called "plastic nature" the inward energy, the operative principle which is as a sort of life to the laws. The "plastic nature" of Cudworth is, in reality, nothing more than the laws of matter, with the proviso that they work by an inherent virtue infused into them by the Creator once for all.

[7] "Embrace" is an inappropriate word. The particles of matter do not clasp. They are not even in contact, but only contiguous.

Digitized by Google

See matter next with various life endued,
Press to one centre still, the gen'ral good.[1]
See dying vegetables life sustain,
See life dissolving vegetate again:[2]
All forms that perish other forms supply,
(By turns we catch the vital breath and die[3])
Like bubbles on the sea of matter born,
They rise, they break, and to that sea return.
Nothing is foreign; parts relate to whole;
One all-extending, all-preserving soul
Connects each being, greatest with the least;[4]
Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast;[5]
All served, all serving: nothing stands alone;
The chain holds on, and where it ends unknown.

Nothing made wholly for itself, nor yet

Has God, thou fool! worked solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?

[1] MS.:

Press to one centre of communtual good.

As the inorganic, or lifeless matter, of which he had previously spoken, gravitates to a centre, so the "matter" which is "endued with life" also "presses" to a "centre"—"the general good." The comparison of the general good to the centre of gravity is inaccurate. The centre of gravity is a point; the general good is diffused good.

[2] Shaftesbury's Moralists, Part i. Sect. 3: "The vegetables by their death sustain the animals, and animal bodies dissolved enrich the earth, and raise again the vegetable world." —WARTON.

[3] Pope is speaking in the context of plants and animals, which are the "they" of ver. 20. He threw ver. 18 into a parenthesis, and said, "*we* catch," because the interjected remark relates to men. The power displayed in the transmission of life from parents to progeny is happily illustrated by Fénelon, in his Traité de l'Existence de Dieu: "What should we think of a watchmaker who could make watches which would produce other watches to infinity, insomuch that the two first watches would be sufficient to propagate and perpetuate the species over all the earth? What should we say of an architect who had the art to construct houses which generated fresh houses to replace our dwellings before they began to fall into ruin?"

[4] "Connects," that is, "the greatest with the least." Pope, in his free use of elliptical expressions, having omitted "the," Warburton interprets the phrase according to the strict language, and supposes the meaning to be that the greatness of the Deity is manifested most in the creatures which are least.

[5] Another couplet follows in the MS.:

More pow'rful each as needful to the rest,
Each in proportion as he blesses blessed.

Digitized by Google

Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn:[1]
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?
Loves of his own and raptures[2] swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously[3] bestride,
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
The birds of heav'n shall vindicate their grain.
Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer;
The hog, that ploughs not, nor obeys thy call,
Lives on the labours of this lord of all.[4]
Know, nature's children all divide her care;
The fur that warms a monarch[5] warmed a bear.[6]
While man exclaims, "See all things for my use!"
"See man for mine!" replies a pampered goose:[7]

wholly for another, but the happiness of all animals mutual.

[1] The passage is indebted to Fenton, in his Epistle to Southerne:

Who winged the winds, and gave the streams to flow,
And raised the rocks, and spread the lawns below.—WAKEFIELD.

MS.:

Think'st thou for thee he feeds the wanton fawn
And not as kindly spreads for him the lawn?
Think'st thou for thee the sky-lark mounts and sings?

[2] Apart from the metre the proper order of the words would be, "loves and raptures of his own swell the note."

[3] MS: "gracefully." The reading Pope substituted is not much better, for the generality of men are not absurd enough to ride "pompously."

[4] This description of the hog as living on the labours of the lord of creation, without ploughing, or obeying his call, gives the idea of some untamed depredator, and not of a domestic animal kept to be eaten. The lord lives on the hog.

[5] MS.: "Sir Gilbert," which meant Sir Gilbert Heathcote, a rich London alderman, who had been lord mayor. The fur was a part of his official robes.

[6] MS.:

Know, Nature's children with one care are nursed; [first.
What warms a monarch, warmed an ermine

[7] After ver. 46 in the former editions:

What care to tend, to lodge, to cram, to treat him! [him.
All this he know; but not that 'twas to eat
As far as goose could judge he reasoned right;
But as to man, mistook the matter quite.—WARBURTON.

Cowley, in his Plagues of Egypt, stanza 1:

All creatures the Creator said were thine:
No creature but might since say, "Man is mine."

Digitized by Google

And just as short of reason he must fall,
Who thinks all made for one, not one for all.[1]
Grant that the pow'rful still the weak control;
Be man the wit,[2] and tyrant of the whole:
Nature that tyrant checks; he only knows,[3]
And helps, another creature's wants and woes.[4]
Say, will the falcon, stooping from above,
Smit with her varying[5] plumage, spare the dove?
Admires the jay the insect's gilded wings?
Or hears the hawk when Philomela sings?[6]

Gay, Fable 49:

The snail looks round on flow'r and tree,
And cries, "All these were made for me."—WAKEFIELD.

The goose is taken from Peter Charron; but such a familiar and burlesque image is improperly introduced among such solid and serious reflections.—WARTON.

Pope copied Charron's predecessor, Montaigne, Book ii. Chap. 12: "For why may not a goose say thus, 'The earth serves me to walk upon, the sun to light me. I am the darling of nature. Is it not man that keeps, lodges, and serves me? It is for me that he both sows and grinds.'" "The pampered goose," says Southey, "must have been forgetful of plucking time, as well as ignorant of the rites that are celebrated in all old-fashioned families on St. Michael's Day." The goose's ignorance of his future fate was part of Pope's argument, and he contended that the men who exclaimed, "See all things for my use," were equally blind to the purposes for which they were destined. The illustration is poor both poetically and philosophically.

[1] Bolingbroke, Fragment 43: "The hypothesis that assumes the world made for man is not founded in reason."—WAKEFIELD.

[2] That is, "Let it be granted that man is the intellectual lord;" for "wit" is here used in its extended sense of intellect in general.

[3] MS.:

'Tis true the strong the weaker still control,
And pow'rful man is master of the whole:
Him therefore nature checks; he only knows, etc.

[4] What an exquisite assemblage is here, down to ver. 70, of deep reflection, humane sentiments, and poetic imagery. It is finely observed that compassion is exclusively the property of man alone.—WARTON.

[5] That is, varying with her position, and the different angles in which the reflected light strikes upon the eye. —WAKEFIELD.

[6] MS.:

Turns he his ear when Philomela sings?
Admires her eye the insect's gilded wings?

The superior mercy with which Pope accredits men is of an unreflecting description, since he implies that it is regulated by gaiety of colour, and sweetness of song, and not by the capacities of creatures for pleasure and pain. The claim itself is unfounded under the circumstances of his comparison. The falcon and the jay must eat their natural prey or starve, and when hunger or gratification solicits him, man never hesitates to kill the animals which are needful for his support or delicious to his palate. If he had a taste for "insects with gilded wings," the

Digitized by Google

Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods.
For some his int'rest prompts him to provide,
For more his pleasure, yet for more his pride:
All feed on one vain patron, and enjoy
Th' extensive blessing of his luxury.[1]
That very life his learned hunger craves,
He saves from famine, from the savage saves;
Nay, feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
And, till he ends the being, makes it blessed,
Which sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain,
Than favoured man by touch ethereal[2] slain.[3]
The creature had his feast of life before;
Thou too must perish, when thy feast is o'er!
To each unthinking being, heav'n, a friend,
Gives not the useless knowledge of its end:
To man imparts it; but with such a view[4]
As, while he dreads it, makes him hope it too;

gilding on their wings would not restrain him. Martial, Lib. xiii. Ep. 70, says of the peacock, "You admire him every time he displays his jewelled wings, and can you, hard-hearted man, deliver him to the cruel cook?" and Pope in his celebrated lines on the pheasant had commemorated the impotence of brilliant plumage to touch the compassion of the sportsman. The poet, in this Epistle, forgot that in Epist. i. ver. 117, he had accused man of "destroying all creatures for his sport or gust," which is to place him below the animals. He is undoubtedly without an equal in his destructive propensities, and too often abuses his power over the sentient world.

[1] Pope starts with the intimation that mankind extend their protection to animals from commiseration for their "wants and woes," and ends with declaring that the motive is "interest, pleasure, and pride."

[2] Borrowed from Milton's Samson Agonistes, ver. 549:

Wherever fountain or fresh current flowed
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of heav'n's fiery rod,
I drank.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Several of the ancients, and many of the Orientals since, esteemed those who were struck by lightning as sacred persons, and the particular favourites of heaven.—POPE.

Plutarch mentions that persons struck with lightning were held in honour, which did not accord with the concurrent belief that lightning was the instrument of Jove's vengeance. Superstitions often clash.

[4] "View" is "prospect,"—a vision of future bliss.

Digitized by Google

The hour concealed, and so remote the fear,
Death still draws nearer, never seeming near.
Great standing miracle! that heav'n assigned
Its only thinking thing[1] this turn of mind.[2]

Reason or instinct alike operate to the good of each individual.

II. Whether with reason, or with instinct blessed,
Know, all enjoy that pow'r which suits them best:[3]
To bliss alike by that direction tend,
And find the means proportion'd to their end.
Say, where full instinct is th' unerring guide,
What pope or council[4] can they need beside?[5]
Reason, however able, cool at best,
Cares not for service, or but serves when pressed,

[1] Sir W. Temple, Works, vol. iii. p. 539: "Man is a thinking thing, whether he will or no."

[2] Pope repeats in this paragraph the argument he uses Epist. i. ver. 77—98, to prove that death has been beneficently disarmed of its terrors. Unthinking animals cannot be troubled at the prospect, for they have no knowledge, he says, of their end, which is more than we can tell; and thinking beings, according to him, have, in addition to the hope which mingles with their dread, the unfailing belief that death, though always drawing nearer, is never near. Such an irrational delusion in a "thinking thing" is, in Pope's estimation, a "standing miracle." The ostensible miracle is deduced from his exaggeration of the truth. The conviction that death is distant usually yields when appearances are against the supposition. Hale men often rush consciously upon certain destruction; old and sick men have constantly the genuine belief that their end is at hand; and dying men expect each day or hour to be their last. The false expectation of prolonged life does not enter into their minds, and can have nothing to do with their resignation, peace, or joy.

[3] This is the true principle from which Pope immediately departs, and exalts instinct above reason. "Man," says Aristotle, "has sometimes more, sometimes less than the beast;" for they are adapted to different functions, and man excels in his sphere, and beasts in theirs. The sphere of man is the highest, and his faculties are proportionate. He cannot do the work of the bee, but he can do his own work, which is greater.

[4] The roman catholic council, which claims to be infallible. Instinct, says Pope, being infallible does not need the guidance of any other infallible authority. When he speaks of "full instinct," he probably means that instinct is always complete within its own limited domain, for if he intended to put "full instinct" in opposition to the instinct which is defective and misleads, he would contradict ver. 94, in which he states that instinct "must go right."

[5] After ver. 84 in the MS.:

While man with op'ning views of various ways
Confounded, by the aid of knowledge strays:
Too weak to choose, yet choosing still in haste,
One moment gives the pleasure and distaste.
—WARBURTON.

Digitized by Google

Stays till we call, and then not often near;[1]
But honest instinct comes a volunteer,
Sure never to o'ershoot, but just to hit,
While still too wide or short is human wit;
Sure by quick nature happiness to gain,
Which heavier reason labours at in vain.[2]
This too serves always, reason never long;
One must go right,[3] the other may go wrong.

[1] In Pope's wide sense of the term, reason adapts means to ends, and distinguishes between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. The faculty operates in part spontaneously, and in part with effort. In an endless number of ordinary circumstances man cannot help observing, comparing, and inferring, and his reason is itself an instinct which "comes a volunteer." The distinction is, that man does not stop with the unconstrained exercise of his powers. He aspires to progress, and laboriously pushes forward, while animals turn round, generation after generation, in the same narrow circle. What Pope supposed was a mark of man's inferiority is just the ground of his superiority. His conquests begin with his difficulties and exertions.

[2] Pope says, ver. 79, that whether blessed with reason or instinct "all enjoy the power that tends to bliss,—all find the means proportioned to the end." He now contradicts himself with regard to reason, and says that, in the effort to determine which of our impulses are beneficial and which injurious, it never hits the mark, but labours in vain after happiness. The wisdom he denies to reason he erroneously ascribes to instinct, which has no superiority in securing an immunity from ill. Through want of foresight, and the limitation of their powers of contrivance, myriads of creatures die of hunger and cold. Those which come off with life suffer frequently from scarcity and inclement seasons. Their defective sagacity makes them a prey to each other and to man, and often when they escape death they receive torturing injuries. The young are exposed to wholesale destruction, and in many instances the parents manifest a grief which if short is at least acute. Creatures of the same species have their intestine enmities, and engage in combats attended by wounds and death. They have their fears, jealousies, and tempers, their alternations of contentment and dissatisfaction, and upon the whole the instinct conferred upon animals seems a less protection from present evils than a moderate use of reason in man. What alleviation there may be to animals in their inevitable trials cannot be known to us, but no one will imagine that they can be supported by sublimer hopes than our own.

[3] This is a mistake. Instinct is often imperfect with reference to its own special ends. Misled by the odour of the African carrion flower, the flesh-flies lay their eggs in it, and the progeny, not being vegetable feeders, are starved. Here the injury is to the offspring. In other cases the erring individuals suffer for their own mistake. Pope, in this Epistle, magnifies instinct, and disparages reason. In Epist. i., ver. 232, he took the opposite side, and said that the reason of man was all the "powers" of animals "in one."

Digitized by Google

See then the acting and comparing pow'rs
One in their nature, which are two in ours;[1]
And reason raise o'er instinct as you can,[2]
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man.[3]
Who taught the nations of the field and flood[4]
To shun their poison,[5] and to choose their food?[6]
Prescient, the tides or tempests to withstand,
Build on the wave,[7] or arch beneath the sand?

[1] MS. :

One in their act to think and to pursue,
Sure to will right, and what they will to do.

Pope's meaning is, that there is no conflict in animals, as in man, between passion and reason, between desire and judgment, that there is not in the operations of animals, as in man's contrivances, a studied adaptation of means to ends, nor a balancing of method against method, and of end against end, but that animals are endowed with singleness of purpose, know instinctively what to do, and how to do it.

[2] MS. :

Reason prefer to instinct if you can.

[3] Addison, Spectator, No. 121: "To me instinct seems the immediate direction of Providence. A modern philosopher delivers the same opinion where he says, God himself is the soul of brutes." Upon the theory that brutes act from the immediate impulse of their Maker, there is a difficulty in explaining the cases of misdirected instinct, as when a jackdaw drops cart-loads of sticks down a chimney, in the vain endeavour to obtain a basis for its nest. Some animals, again, profit by experience, as foxes which improve in cunning, and we must infer that the assistance afforded by the Deity increases with the experience of the animals, though the experience is in nowise concerned in the result. A viciousness of temper, which resembles the evil passions of men, sometimes dominates in brutes, as we may see in horses and dogs, and we cannot ascribe these propensities to the immediate instigation of the Creator, unless we accept Pope's doctrine that God "pours fierce ambition into Cæsar's mind."

[4] "Wood" in all editions, though designated as an erratum by Pope in his small edition of 1736. The mention of "tides" and "waves" in the next couplet should have called attention to a mistake, which seems obvious enough even without any special notice.—CROKER.

[5] This instinct is not invariable. Animals eat food poisoned artificially, and sometimes feed greedily upon poisonous natural products. Yew is a poison to cows and horses, and yet with an abundance of wholesome herbage they will sometimes eat the yew.

[6] Every verb and epithet has here a descriptive force. We find more imagery from these lines to the end of the Epistle, than in any other parts of this Essay. The origin of the connections in social life, the account of the state of nature, the rise and effects of superstition and tyranny, and the restoration of true religion and just government, all these ought to be mentioned as passages that deserve high applause, nay, as some of the most exalted pieces of English poetry.—WARTON.

[7] The halcyon or king-fisher was

Digitized by Google

Who made the spider parallels design,[1]
Sure as Demoivre,[2] without rule or line?[3]
Who bid the stork, Columbus-like, explore
Heav'ns not his own, and worlds unknown before?[4]
Who calls the council, states the certain day,[5]
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?[6]

reputed by the ancients "to build upon the wave," and the entrance to the floating nest was supposed to be contrived in a manner to admit the bird, and exclude the water of the sea. Either Pope believed the fable, or he thought himself at liberty to illustrate the marvels of instinct by fictitious examples. The couplet was originally thus in the MS. :

The cramp-fish, remora what secret charm
To stop the bark, arrest the distant arm?

The cramp-fish is the torpedo. "She has the quality," says Montaigne, "not only to benumb all the members that touch her, but even through the nets transmits a heavy dullness into the hands of those that move them; nay, it is further said, that if one pour water upon her, he will feel this numbness mount up the water to the hand, and stupify the feeling through the water." The remora, or sucking-fish, sticks by the disc on the top of its head, to ships and other fishes, and "renders immoveable," says Pliny, "the vessels which no chain could stay, no weighty anchor moor." The mighty prowess ascribed to the remora is imaginary, and the electrical capacity of the torpedo greatly exaggerated. The story of halcyon, cramp-fish, and remora are all in Book ii. chap. 12 of Montaigne's Essays.

[1] The geometric, or garden-spider, makes a web of concentric circles, but the house-spider, which used to have credit for weaving a web of parallel longitudinal lines crossed by parallel transverse lines, observes no such regularity in the construction of her toils.

[2] An eminent mathematician.—POPE.

He was born in France in 1667. Driven from his native country in 1685 by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he settled in London, and died there in 1754. He got his living mainly by teaching mathematics, in which his skill was consummate, and his publications on the subject attest the acuteness and originality of his genius. He was on terms of friendship with Newton.

[3] The poet probably took the hint of this passage from Lord Bacon's De augmentis scientiarum: "Who taught the raven in a drought to throw pebbles into an hollow tree where she espied water, that the water might rise so as she might come to it? Who taught the bee to sail through such a vast sea of air, and to find a way from the field in flower, a great way off to her hive?" —RUFFHEAD.

[4] MS. :

Through air's vast oceans see the storks explore,
Columbus-like, a world unknown before.

[5] From Le Spectacle de la Nature of the Abbé Pluche: "Who informed their young that it would be requisite to travel into a foreign country? What particular bird takes the charge upon him of assembling their grand council, and fixing the day of their departure?"

[6] The MS. has the lines which follow :

Digitized by Google

Reason or instinct operate also to society in all animals.

III. God, in the nature of each being, founds
Its proper bliss, and sets its proper bounds:
But as he framed a whole, the whole to bless,
On mutual wants built mutual happiness:[1]
So from the first, eternal order ran,
And creature linked to creature, man to man.

How far society carried by instinct.

Whate'er of life all-quick'ning ether[2] keeps,
Or breathes through air, or shoots beneath the deeps,
Or pours profuse on earth, one nature feeds
The vital flame, and swells the genial seeds.
Not man alone, but all that roam the wood,
Or wing the sky, or roll along the flood,
Each loves itself, but not itself alone,
Each sex desires alike, till two are one.
Nor ends the pleasure with the fierce embrace:
They love themselves a third time in their race.[3]

Boast we of arts? a bee can better hit
The squares than Gibbs, the bearings than Sir Kit.
To poise his dome a martin has the knack,
While bold Bernini lets St. Peter's crack.

Gibbs was born about 1674 and died in 1754. He designed St. Martin's church in London, and the Radcliffe library at Oxford. Sir Kit is Sir Christopher Wren. A century after the dome of St. Peter's was erected, Bernini inserted staircases in the hollow piers which support the cupola, and the cracks in the dome were falsely ascribed to his operations. The martins are not more infallible than man, and, unlike man, they do not profit by experience. White of Selborne relates that they built in the window corners of a house in his neighbourhood, where the recess was too shallow to protect their work, which was washed down with every hard rain, and yet year after year they persevered through the summer in their useless drudgery.

[1] Bolingbroke, Fragment 51: "We are designed to be social, not solitary creatures. Mutual wants unite us, and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happiness depends, are founded in them."—WAKEFIELD.

[2] Ether was reputed to be an element finer than air, and to fill the regions beyond our atmosphere. Some of the stoics believed that ether was the animating principle of all things, and Pope adopted the doctrine. Hence he calls ether "all-quickening," and says that "one nature feeds the vital flame" in all the creatures of earth, air, and water.

[3] Bolingbroke, Fragment 51: "As our parents loved themselves in us, so we love ourselves in our children."—WAKEFIELD.

Dryden, Absalom and Achitophel:

Our fond begetters who would never die,
Love but themselves in their posterity.

The lines from ver. 115 to ver. 124 are varied in the MS.:

Quick with this spirit new-born nature moved,
Itself each creature in its species loved;

Digitized by Google

Thus beast and bird their common charge attend,
The mothers nurse it, and the sires defend;[1]
The young dismissed to wander earth or air,
There stops the instinct, and there ends the care:[2]
The link dissolves, each seeks a fresh embrace,
Another love succeeds, another race.
A longer care man's helpless kind demands;
That longer care contracts more lasting bands:[3]
Reflection, reason, still the ties improve,
At once extend the int'rest, and the love;[4]
With choice we fix,[5] with sympathy we burn;
Each virtue in each passion takes its turn;

How much farther society is carried by reason.

Each sought a pleasure not possessed alone,
Each sex desired alike till two were one.
This impulse animates; one nature feeds
The vital lamp, and swells the genial seeds:
All spread their image with like ardour stung,
All love themselves, reflected in their young.

Dr. George Campbell remarks, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, that to talk of creatures loving themselves in their progeny is nonsensical rant. Of many fathers and mothers it would be nearer the truth to say that they love their children almost to the exclusion of themselves. Neither Pope nor Bolingbroke had children, and not having experienced, they misapprehended, the parental feeling.

[1] Pope's division of duties is not the law of creation. In a multiplicity of cases both parents feed, and both defend their young. When the sire is of no use in providing food, as with grass-eating animals, he equally abandons his defending function, and does not even recognise his offspring.

[2] MS. :

Till taught to range the wood, or wing the air,
There instinct ends its passion and its care.

[3] Locke, Civil Government, book ii. chap. vii. sect. 79 : "The conjunction between male and female ought to last so long as is necessary to the support of the young ones. And herein, I think, lies the chief, if not the only reason, why the male and female in mankind are tied to a longer conjunction than other creatures, whose young being able to subsist of themselves before the time of procreation returns again, the conjugal bond dissolves of itself."

[4] Bolingbroke, Fragment 3 : "Reason improved sociability, extended it to relations more remote, and united several families into one community, as instinct had united several individuals into one family." "Interest" in Pope's line signifies "advantage." Reason, he says, teaches man to improve on the ties of instinct, and form connections beyond his immediate family, whereby he at once extends his love, and the advantages derived from it.

[5] That is, man becomes constant from choice.

[6] MS. :

And ev'ry tender passion takes its turn.

The line in the text alludes to Pope's hypothesis that every virtue is grafted upon a ruling passion.

Digitized by Google

And still new needs, new helps, new habits rise,
That graft benevolence on charities.[1]
Still as one brood, and as another rose,
These nat'ral love maintained, habitual those:[2]
The last scarce ripened into perfect man,
Saw helpless him from whom their life began:[3]
Mem'ry and forecast just returns engage,
That pointed back to youth, this on to age;
While pleasure, gratitude, and hope combined,
Still spread the int'rest, and preserved the kind.[4]

Of the state of nature that it was social.

IV. Nor think in nature's state they blindly trod;
The state of nature was the reign of God:[5]
Self-love and social at her birth[6] began,
Union[7] the bond of all things, and of man.

[1] "Charity" is used in the antiquated sense of "love." "New needs," says Pope, give rise to "new helps," and the virtue "benevolence" is grafted upon the natural affections.

[2] He means that the latest brood, being young children, love their parents by nature, while the previous brood, being grown up, only love parents from habit.

[3] MS. :

Scarce had the last the parents' care outgrown
Before they saw those parents want their own.

Dryden, Palamon and Arcite, Book iii.:

and issuing into man,
Grudges their life from whence his own began.

[4] MS. :

Stretch the long interest, and support the line.

[5] The MS. goes on thus :

She spake, and man her high behests obeyed; [strayed:
Harmless amidst his fellow-beasts he
For pride was not; joint tenant of the shade
He shared with beasts his table and his bed;
No murder etc.

"He speaks," says M. Crousaz, "of what passed in the earliest ages of the world no less positively than an eye-witness." Pope followed the ancient fable which he may have read, among other places, in Montaigne's Essays, Book ii. Chap. 12 : "Plato, in his picture of the golden age under Saturn, reckons, among the chief advantages that a man then had, his communications with beasts, by which he acquired a very perfect intelligence and prudence, and led his life more happily than we could do."

[6] "Her birth" is the birth of nature. The personification of nature in the phrase "the state of nature," or "the natural state," is so forced, that we do not at once perceive that "nature" is the noun to which "her" refers.

[7] "Union" is put for voluntary union, the union of social affection, in contrast to the bonds of fear, coercion, and the necessities of life, which are large elements in the present condition of mankind. The beasts were included in the common league, and animals of prey unknown

Digitized by Google

Pride then was not; nor arts, that pride to aid;
Man walked with beast joint tenant of the shade;[1]
The same his table, and the same his bed;
No murder clothed him,[2] and no murder fed.
In the same temple, the resounding wood,[3]
All vocal beings hymned their equal God:[4]
The shrine with gore unstained, with gold undressed,
Unbribed, unbloody, stood the blameless priest:[5]
Heav'n's attribute was universal care,
And man's prerogative to rule, but spare.
Ah! how unlike the man of times to come![6]
Of half that live the butcher and the tomb;
Who, foe to nature, hears the gen'ral groan,
Murders their species, and betrays his own.[7]
But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And ev'ry death its own avenger breeds;

in Pope's state of nature. But he did not keep steady to his first account.

[1] So Hall, Satires, Book iii. Sat. 1:

Then crept in pride, and peevish covetise,
And man grew greedy, discordous, and nice.
Now man that erst hail-fellow was with beast,
Woxe on to ween himself a god at least.—
WAKEFIELD.

[2] Dryden, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book xv.:

The woolly fleece that clothed her murderer.

[3] Virgil, Ecl. x. 58: "lucos sonantes;" Dryden, "sounding woods."—WAKEFIELD.

[4] MS.:

He called on heav'n for blessing, they for food.

[5] MS.:

Unstained with gore the grassy altar grew,
Priests yet were temperate, yet no passions knew;
Nor yet would glutton zeal devoutly eat,
Nor faithful av'rice hugged his god in plate.

The pagans feasted upon the meat they offered to idols, which is what we are to understand by the "glutton zeal" that "devoutly eats."

[6] Dryden, Virg. Æn. ix. 640:

Ah how unlike the living is the dead.—
WAKEFIELD.

[7] MS.:

Of half that live himself the living tomb.

[8] MS.:

Who, foe to nature, other kinds o'erthrown
Restless he seeks dominion o'er his own.

Or,

Who deaf to nature's universal groan,
Murders all other kinds, betrays his own.

This is the same amiable being who is celebrated, ver. 51, for "helping the wants and woes of other creatures," and sparing singing-birds and gilded insects out of pure compassion.

Digitized by Google

The fury-passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage,[1] man.[2]
See him from nature rising slow to art![3]
To copy instinct then was reason's part;
Thus then to man the voice of nature spake[4]—
"Go, from the creatures thy instructions take:
Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield;[5]
Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;[6]
Thy arts of building from the bee receive;[7]
Learn of the mole to plough, the worm to weave;[8]
Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.[9]

Reason instructed by instinct in the invention of arts, and in the forms of society.

[1] Pope probably meant that man was a "fiercer savage" than the animals of which he shed the blood, but as the "blood" only is mentioned, there is no proper positive to the comparative.

[2] Dryden in his version of the speech of Pythagoras in Ovid, Met. Book xv., which our poet doubtless had in view through this whole delineation:

Th' essay of bloody feasts on brutes began,
And after forged the sword to murder man.
—WAKEFIELD.

MS.:

While nature, strict the injury to scan,
Left man the only beast to prey on man.

[3] MS.:

In early times when man aspired to art.

The lines from ver. 161 to 168 are parenthetical, and Pope now goes back to the primitive age in which uncorrupted man associated freely with the beasts, and profited by their teaching.

[4] MS.:

'Twas then the voice of mighty nature spake.

[5] It is a caution commonly practised amongst navigators, when thrown upon a desert coast, and in want of refreshments, to observe what fruits have been touched by the birds, and to venture on these without further hesitation.—WARBURTON.

[6] See Pliny's Nat. Hist. Lib. viii. cap. 27, where several instances are given of animals discovering the medicinal efficacy of herbs by their own use of them, and pointing to some operations in the art of healing by their own practice.—WARBURTON.

The instances are all fanciful or fabulous.

[7] Montaigne, Essays, Book ii. Chap. 12: "Democritus held and proved, that most of the arts we have were taught us by other animals, as by the spider to weave and sew, by the swallow to build, by the swan and nightingale music, and by several animals to make medicines."

[8] The MS. adds:

Behold the rabbit's fortress in the sands,
The beaver's storied house not made with hands.

A rabbit-burrow has no resemblance to a military fortress, and Pope prudently omitted the incongruous comparison. Martial, Lib. xiii. Ep. 60, had used the illustration in a directly opposite sense, and said that rabbits, by teaching the art of mining, had shown the enemy how fortresses could be taken.

[9] Oppian, Halicut. Lib. i., describes this fish in the following manner:

Digitized by Google

Here too all forms of social union find,
And hence let reason, late, instruct mankind:[1]
Here subterranean works and cities see;
There towns aërial on the waving tree.
Learn each small people's genius, policies,
The ants' republic, and the realm of bees:
How those in common all their wealth bestow,[2]
And anarchy without confusion know;[3]
And these for ever, though a monarch reign,
Their sep'rate cells and properties maintain.[4]
Mark what unvaried laws preserve each state,
Laws wise as nature, and as fixed as fate.
In vain thy reason finer webs shall draw,
Entangle justice in her net of law,
And right, too rigid, harden into wrong;[5]
Still for the strong too weak, the weak too strong.

"They swim on the surface of the sea, on the back of their shells, which exactly resemble the hulk of a ship. They raise two feet like masts, and extend a membrane between, which serves as a sail; the other two feet they employ as oars at the side. They are usually seen in the Mediterranean."—Pope.

The paper-nautilus, or Argonauta Argo, has eight arms. The first pair in the female expand at their extremities, so that each of the two arms terminates in a broad thin membrane. These broad membranes do not exist in the male, and modern naturalists reject the idea that they are used for sails.

[1] MS.:

There, too, each form of social commerce find,
So late by reason taught to human kind.
Behold th' embodied locust rushing forth
In sabled millions from th' inclement north;
In herds the wolves, invasive robbers, roam,
In flocks, the sheep pacific, race at home.
What warlike discipline the cranes display,
How leagued their squadron, how direct their way.

[2] The Guardian, No. 157: "Everything is common among ants."

[3] "Anarchy without confusion" is a contradiction in terms, according to the meaning which is now universally attached to the word anarchy. Pope understands by it the mere absence of all inequality of station.

[4] The Guardian, No. 157: "Bees have each of them a hole in their hives; their honey is their own; every bee minds her own concerns." The natural history of former times abounded in fables, and among the number was the fancy that each bee had its separate cell, and private store of honey.

[5] An adaptation of the Latin proverb, mentioned by Cicero, Off. i. 10, and Terence, Heaut. iv. 5, that overstrained law is often unrestrained injustice. The letter contravenes the spirit.

[6] The imagery of the passage is derived from an observation of a Greek philosopher, who compared laws to spiders' webs,—too fragile to

Digitized by Google

Yet go! and thus o'er all the creatures sway,
Thus let the wiser make the rest obey;
And for those arts mere instinct could afford,
Be crowned as monarchs, or as gods adored."[1]

Origin of political societies.

V. Great nature spoke; observant man obeyed;
Cities were built, societies were made:[2]
Here rose one little state; another near[3]
Grew by like means, and joined through love or fear.
Did here the trees with ruddier burdens bend,
And there the streams in purer rills descend?
What war could ravish, commerce could bestow,
And he returned a friend who came a foe.
Converse and love mankind might strongly draw,[4]

hold fast great offenders, and too strong to suffer trivial culprits to escape.—WAKEFIELD.

Pope upbraids men for enacting laws too strong for the weak instead of following the laws of bees, which are "wise as nature, and as fixed as fate." Such is their superior consideration for the weak that the workers kill the drones when they become burthensome to them, and so far are we behind them in our poor law legislation that we are compelled to maintain the useless members of society,—the old, the crippled, the hopelessly sick, the insane, the idiotic —all of whom, if we would only learn mercy and wisdom of the bee, we should immediately put to death. The doctrine of Pope is altogether childish. The contracted routine of a bee's existence has too little in common with the complicated relations of human life for bee-hive usages to displace the statutes of the realm.

[1] Till ed. 5:

Who for those arts they learned of brutes before,
As kings shall crown them, or as gods adore.—POPE.

[2] Roscommon's version of Horace's Art of Poetry:

Cities were built, and useful laws were made.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] In the MS. thus:

The neighbours leagued to guard their common spot,
And love was nature's dictate, murder not.
For want alone each animal contends;
Tigers with tigers, that removed, are friends.
Plain nature's wants the common mother crowned,
She poured her acorns, herbs, and streams around.
No treasure then for rapine to invade,
What need to fight for sunshine, or for shade?
And half the cause of contest was removed,
When beauty could be kind to all who loved.—WARBURTON.

Of the first couplet there are two other versions in the MS.:

Fear would forbid th' unpractised to engage,
And nature's dictate love, not blood and rage.

Or,

Unpractised man, that knew no murd'ring skill,
And nature's dictate was to love, not kill.

[4] MS.:

Commerce, convenience, change might strongly draw.

Digitized by Google

When love was liberty, and nature law.[1]
Thus states were formed: the name of king unknown, Origin of monarchy.
Till common int'rest placed the sway in one.[2]
'Twas virtue only (or in arts or arms,
Diffusing blessings, or averting harms),
The same which in a sire the sons obeyed,[3]
A prince the father of a people made.[4]
VI. Till then, by nature crowned, each patriarch sat, Origin of patriarchal government.
King, priest, and parent of his growing state;[5]

[1] These two lines added since the first edition.—POPE.

The second line of the couplet had already appeared in the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, ver. 92, in connection with sentiments which leave no doubt of Pope's meaning. In the primitive and golden age he held that love had full liberty to obey its inclinations, or, as he expressed it in the passage of the MS. quoted by Warburton, "beauty could then be kind to all who loved." In other words there was a community of women regulated by no other law than natural impulse.

[2] MS.:

These states had lords 'tis true, but each its own,
Not all subjected to the rule of one,
Unless where from one lineage all began,
And swelled into a nation from a man.

The nature of the distinction which Pope draws between the lordship over the early states, and kingly rule, is clear from ver. 215, where he says that till monarchy was established patriarchal government prevailed, and each state was only a collection of relations who obeyed the family chief. In a monarchy two or more states were joined together, and the national began to take the place of the family tie. The effect of the change would be great. The social bond between the governor and the governed would be weakened, and the official dignity, the harsh authority, and selfish impulses of the ruler would be quickly increased.

[3] "Sons," that is, "obeyed a sire" on account of his "virtue," and not on account of his parental authority. Pope had in his mind the remarks of Locke. A mature understanding is necessary for the right direction of the will, and parents must govern the will of the child till he is competent to govern his own. He is then responsible to himself. He owes his parents lasting honour, gratitude, and assistance, but ceases to be under their command, and if, in primitive times, the children, who had arrived at years of discretion, accepted a father for their ruler, his "virtue," says Pope, was the cause.

[4] Locke, Civil Government, bk. ii. chap. vi. sect. 74: "It is obvious to conceive how easy it was in the first ages of the world for the father of the family to become the prince of it." The right order of Pope's distorted language is that "virtue made the father of a people a prince." He was raised to be a prince because he had manifested a fatherly care for the people.

[5] Hooker, Eccles. Polity, bk. i. chap. x. sect. 4: "The chiefest person in every household was always as it were a king, and fathers did at the first exercise the office of priests."

Digitized by Google

On him, their second Providence, they hung,
Their law his eye, their oracle his tongue.
He from the wond'ring furrow called the food,[1]
Taught to command the fire, control the flood,
Draw forth the monsters of th' abyss profound,
Or fetch th' aërial eagle to the ground,[2]
Till drooping, sick'ning, dying they began[3]
Whom they revered as god to mourn as man:
Then, looking up from sire to sire, explored
One great first Father, and that first adored;[4]

[1] A finer example can perhaps scarce be given of a compact and comprehensive style. The manner in which the four elements were subdued is comprised in these four lines alone. There is not an useless word in this passage. There are but three epithets, — "wond'ring, profound, aerial"—and they are placed precisely with the very substantive that is of most consequence. If there had been epithets joined with the other substantives, it would have weakened the nervousness of the sentence. This was a secret of versification Pope well understood, and hath often practised with peculiar success. — WARTON.

Warton's criticism appears to be wrong throughout. He says the lines describe "the manner in which the four elements were subdued;" but we learn nothing of "the manner" by being told that "fire" was "commanded," and water "controlled." He says "there is not an useless word;" but as either "command" or "control" would apply with equal propriety to both fire and water, the second verb is added solely to eke out the line, and the adjective "profound," when joined to "abyss," is weak tautology for the sake of the rhyme. He says that the epithets "are placed precisely with the very substantive that is of most consequence;" but why is the "fire" less important than the "abyss?" The verses might pass without comment if Warton had not extolled them for imaginary merits. The first line is an example of the sacrifice of truth and picturesqueness to hyperbolical, affected forms of speech. To talk of "calling food from the wond'ring furrow" conveys a false idea of agricultural processes.

[2] MS.:

He crowned the wond'ring earth with golden grain,
Taught to command the fire, control the main,
Drew from the secret deep the finny drove,
And fetched the soaring eagle from above.

The first couplet is again varied:

He taught the arts of life, the means of food,
To pierce the forest, and to stem the flood.

[3] MS.:

Till weak, and old, and dying they began.

This couplet is followed in the MS. by a second which Pope omitted:

Saw his shrunk arms, pale cheeks, and faded eye,
Beheld him bend, and droop, and sink, and die.

[4] Men are said by the poet to have been awakened by the death of the patriarch to reflection upon his original, and to have advanced upwards

Digitized by Google

Or plain tradition, that this all begun,[1]
Conveyed unbroken faith from sire to son;
The worker from the work distinct was known,
And simple reason never sought but one.[2]
Ere wit oblique had broke that steady light,[3]
Man, like his Maker, saw that all was right;[4]
To virtue, in the paths of pleasure trod,
And owned a father when he owned a God.[5]
Love all the faith, and all th' allegiance then,
For nature knew no right divine in men,[6]
No ill could fear in God; and understood
A sov'reign being but a sov'reign good.

Origin of true religion and government from the principle of love; and of superstition

from father to father, that is, from cause to cause, till their enquiries terminated in one original Father, one first, independent, uncreated cause.—JOHNSON.

At ver. 148 we are told that "the state of nature was the reign of God," and at ver. 156 that "all vocal beings" —man, bird, and beast—joined then in "hymning" their Creator. This condition of things, we learn from ver. 149, dated from the "birth" of nature, which is contrary to Pope's present conjecture that the primitive families may, perhaps, have had no conception of a Deity. The poet's language is irrational. If God did not reveal himself to them in any direct way, they might yet be supposed capable of inferring from their own existence and that of the universe, a truth which their posterity deduced from the death of patriarch after patriarch.

[1] Pope ought to have written "began." He has improperly put the participle for the past tense. The meaning of the couplet is, that men may possibly have learned from tradition that, "this all," did not exist from eternity, but had a beginning, and therefore a Creator.

[2] A belief, that is, in the unity of God was the original faith, and polytheism a later corruption.

[3] Warburton says that the allusion is to the refraction of light in passing through the oblique sides of the glass prism.

[4] It was before the fall that God pronounced that all was good. But our author never adverts to any lapsed condition of man.—WARTON.

He adverts to it in this passage, where he contrasts primitive virtue with subsequent license.

[5] This couplet follows in the MS.:

'Twas simple worship in the native grove,
Religion, morals, had no name but love.

[6] The divine right of kings to their throne, and the unlawfulness of deposing them, however much they might oppress the people for whose benefit they were appointed to rule, was a doctrine first taught in the time of the Stuarts. "It was never heard of among mankind," says Locke writing in 1690, "till it was revealed to us by the divinity of this last age." In opposition to the slavish theory which would subject nations to despots, Pope says that when government was instituted allegiance was the voluntary homage of love.

Digitized by Google

and tyranny from that of fear.

True faith, true policy, united ran,
That was but love of God, and this of man.
Who first taught souls enslaved, and realms undone,
Th' enormous[1] faith of many made for one;
That proud exception to all nature's laws,
T' invert the world, and counterwork its cause?[2]
Force first made conquest, and that conquest, law;
Till superstition taught the tyrant awe,[3]
Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conqu'rors, slaves of subjects made:
She, midst the lightning's blaze, and thunder's sound,
When rocked the mountains, and when groaned the ground,[4]
She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,
To pow'r unseen, and mightier far than they:
She, from the rending earth and bursting skies,
Saw gods descend, and fiends infernal rise:[5]
Here fixed the dreadful, there the bless'd abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;

[1] Mr. Pope told us that of the number that had read these Epistles, he knew of no one that took the elegance, or even the true meaning of the word "enormous," except Lord Bolingbroke alone. I wonder at it. I am sure I never understood it otherwise than as "out of all rule," and I do not know how anybody could that had read Horace's "abnormis sapiens," and Milton's "enormous bliss." Mr. Pope added for that reason, against his rule of brevity, the two next lines to explain it, and accordingly I since saw them interlined in the original MS.—RICHARDSON.

Milton's "enormous bliss" was bliss "wild, above rule or art." The persons who misunderstood the epithet in Pope's poem must have been those who read the MS.; for the explanatory couplet appeared in the first edition of the Epistle. He obviously meant by "enormous faith" that the faith was an enormity, and it is difficult to conjecture what other sense could be attached to his phrase.

[2] The "cause" here signifies the purpose or motive manifested in the constitution of the world, and this purpose is "inverted" by the doctrine that "many are made for one." The one is made for the many,—the prince for the people.

[3] Wicked rulers, terrified by an evil conscience, became the dupe of impostors who professed to speak in the name of the invisible powers.

[4] MS.:

Split the huge oak, and rocked the rending ground.

Wakefield points out that the lines, ver. 249—252, are from Lucretius, v. 1217.

[5] MS.:

From op'ning earth showed fiends infernal nigh,
And gods supernal from the bursting sky.

Digitized by Google

Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;[1]
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, formed like tyrants, tyrants would believe.[2]
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide;
And hell was built on spite, and heav'n on pride.
Then sacred seemed th' ethereal vault no more;[3]
Altars grew marble then, and reeked with gore:[4]
Then first the Flamen[5] tasted living food;[6]
Next his grim idol smeared with human blood;[7]

[1] Horace, Ode iii. bk. iii., translated by Addison:

An umpire, partial, and unjust,
And a lewd woman's impious lust.

[2] Bolingbroke, Fragment 22: "Men made the Supreme Being after their own image. Fierce and cruel themselves they represented him hating without reason, revenging without provocation, and punishing without measure." Pope says that tyrants would believe such gods as were formed like tyrants. He meant that the tyrants would believe *in* the gods, but probably found the "in" unmanageable.

[3] MS.:

The native wood seemed sacred now no more.

People no longer held sacred the natural temple in which, ver. 155, men and beasts formerly "hymned their God," but it was thought necessary to worship in costly buildings, and sacrifice animals on "marble altars."

[4] Bolingbroke, Fragment 24: "God was appeased provided his altars reeked with gore." A sentence of the same Fragment furnished Pope with his view of heathen sacrifices: "The Supreme Being was represented so vindictive and cruel, that nothing less than acts of the utmost cruelty could appease his anger, and his priests were so many butchers of men and other animals."

[5] The "flamen" was a priest attached exclusively to the service of some particular god.

[6] MS.:

The glutton priest first tasted living food.

Bolingbroke, Fragment 24: "As if God was appeased whenever the priest was glutted with roast meat." Wakefield remarks that Pope followed Pythagoras in calling food "living," because it had once been alive. A meat diet is said, ver. 167, to have been the origin of wars, and here we are told that the "flamen first tasted living food" after war and tyranny had over-spread the earth, which is an inconsistency, unless Pope believed that his "glutton priests" were more abstemious than the rest of mankind till animals were sacrificed in the name of religion. The poet, in this Epistle, is loud in denouncing the practice of eating animal food, but he ate it without scruple himself.

[7] Milton, Par. Lost, i. 392:

First Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parent's tears,
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that passed through fire
To his grim idol.

Many of Pope's writings are strewed

Digitized by Google

With heav'n's own thunders shook the world below,
And played the god an engine on his foe.[1]

The influence of self-love operating to the social and public good.

So drives self-love, through just, and through unjust,
To one man's pow'r, ambition, lucre, lust:
The same self-love, in all, becomes the cause
Of what restrains him, government and laws.[2]
For what one likes, if others like as well,
What serves one will, when many wills rebel?
How shall he keep, what, sleeping or awake,
A weaker may surprise, a stronger take?[3]
His safety must his liberty restrain:
All join to guard what each desires to gain.
Forced into virtue thus by self-defence,
Ev'n kings learned justice and benevolence:
Self-love forsook the path it first pursued,
And found the private in the public good.[4]

Restoration of true religion and government on their first principle.

'Twas then the studious head or gen'rous mind,
Foll'wer of God, or friend of human-kind,
Poet or patriot,[5] rose but to restore
The faith and moral nature gave before;

with Miltonic phrases, though they need not be pointed out, and certainly do not detract from his general merit. Such interweavings of significant and forcible expressions have often a striking effect. — BOWLES.

[1] The image is derived from the old engines of war, such as the catapult which threw stones. The Flamen made an engine of his god, and assailed foes by threatening them with chastisement from heaven.

[2] Hooker, Eccles. Polity, bk. i. chap. x. sect. 5: "At the first, it may be, that all was permitted unto their discretion which were to rule, till they saw that to live by one man's will became the cause of all men's misery. This constrained them to come unto laws." — WARTON.

In the MS. there is this couplet after ver. 272:

For say what makes the liberty of man?
'Tis not in doing what he would but can.

The lines were intended to give the reason why law is not an infringement of liberty, and were probably cancelled because the reason was as applicable to cruel as to salutary laws. Upon Pope's principle the worst despotism would not interfere with the liberty of the subject, provided only that resistance was hopeless.

[3] When the proprietor is asleep the weak rob him by stealth, and when he is awake the strong rob him by violence.

[4] Bolingbroke, Fragment 6: "Private good depends on the public."

[5] The inspired strains of the Hebrew Scriptures are the only instance in which poetry has "restored faith and morals." The heathen poets

Digitized by Google

Relumed her ancient light, not kindled new;
If not God's image, yet his shadow drew:
Taught pow'r's due use to people and to kings;
Taught not to slack, nor strain its tender strings,
The less, or greater, set so justly true,
That touching one must strike the other too;[1]
Till jarring int'rests of themselves create
Th' according music[2] of a well-mixed state.[3]
Such is the world's great harmony, that springs
From order, union, full consent[4] of things;[5]
Where small and great, where weak and mighty made
To serve, not suffer, strengthen, not invade;[6]
More pow'rful each as needful to the rest,
And in proportion as it blesses, bless'd;
Draw to one point, and to one centre bring
Beast, man, or angel, servant, lord, or king.
For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administered is best:[7]

Mixed government.

arious forms of each, and

adopted the absurd and profligate fables current in their day, and christian poets have never done more than reflect the prevalent christianity. The term "patriot" is commonly applied to political benefactors, and not to the preachers and disseminators of righteousness. Pope fell back on the fiction of regenerating poets and patriots to avoid all mention of the saints and martyrs who really performed the mighty work. Bolingbroke hated the apostles of genuine religion, and his pupil had no reverence for them.

[1] Pope breaks down in his comparison of a mixed government to a stringed instrument. An instrument would not be "set justly true," but rendered worthless, when in "touching one" string the musician "must strike the other too."

[2] This is the very same illustration that Tully uses, De Republica: "Quæ harmonia a musicis dicitur in cantu, ea est in civitate concordia."—WARTON.

[3] The deduction and application of the foregoing principles, with the use or abuse of civil and ecclesiastical policy, was intended for the subject of the third book.—POPE.

[4] "Consent" is now limited to mental consent, and the word is obsolete in the sense of "consent of things."

[5] From Denham's Cooper's Hill:

Wisely she knew the harmony of things,
As well as that of sounds, from discord springs.—HURD.

[6] "Where the small and weak" are "made to serve, not suffer," "the great and mighty to strengthen, not invade."

[7] This couplet is at variance with ver. 289—294, where a mixed form of government is lauded for its superiority.

Digitized by Google

the true use of all.

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight; 305
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right:[1]
In faith and hope the world will disagree,[2]
But all mankind's concern is charity:[3]
All must be false that thwart this one great end;
And all of God, that bless mankind, or mend. 310

Man, like the gen'rous vine, supported lives;
The strength he gains is from th' embrace he gives.[4]
On their own axis as the planets run,
Yet make at once[5] their circle round the sun,[6]

[1] Cowley's verses on the death of Crashaw:

His path, perhaps, in some nice tenets might
Be wrong; his life, I'm sure, was in the right.

The position is demonstrably absurd in both poets. All conduct originates in principles. Where the principles, therefore, are not strictly pure, and accurately true, the conduct must deviate from the line of perfect rectitude.—WAKEFIELD.

"I prefer a bad action to a bad principle," says Rousseau, somewhere, and Rousseau was right. A bad action may remain isolated; a bad principle is always prolific, because, after all, it is the mind which governs, and man acts according to his thoughts much oftener than he himself imagines.—GUIZOT.

He whose life is in the right cannot, says Pope, in any sense calling for blame, have a wrong faith. But the answer is that his life cannot be in the right unless in so far as it bends to the influences of a true faith. How feeble a conception must that man have of the infinity which lurks in a human spirit, who can persuade himself that its total capacities of life are exhaustible by the few gross acts incident to social relations, or open to human valuation? The true internal acts of moral man are his thoughts, his yearnings, his aspirations, his sympathies or repulsions of heart. This is the life of man as it is appreciable by heavenly eyes.—DE QUINCEY.

[2] MS.:

Prefer we then the greater to the less,
For charity is all men's happiness.

[3] MS.:

But charity the greatest of the three.

1 Cor. xiii. 13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

[4] The MS. adds this couplet:

Th' extended earth is but one sphere of bliss
To him, who makes another's blessing his.

[5] At the same time.

[6] From the Spectator, No. 588, said to be written by Mr. Grove: "Is benevolence inconsistent with self-love? Are their motions contrary? No more than the diurnal rotation of the earth is opposed to its annual; or its motion round its own centre, which might be improved as an illustration of self-love, to that which whirls it about the common centre of the world, answering to universal benevolence."—WARTON.

Digitized by Google

So two consistent motions act the soul,
And one regards itself, and one the whole.
Thus God and nature[1] linked the gen'ral frame,
And bade self-love and social be the same.[2]

[1] "Nature" is not a power co-ordinate with God, but only the means by which he acts.

[2] Bolingbroke, Fragment: "A due use of our reason makes self-love and social coincide, or even become in effect the same."—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE IV.

OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN WITH RESPECT TO HAPPINESS.

I. False notions of happiness, philosophical and popular, answered from ver. 19 to 26. II. It is the end of all men, and attainable by all, ver. 29. God intends happiness to be equal; and, to be so, it must be social, since all particular happiness depends on general, and since he governs by general, not particular laws, ver. 35. As it is necessary for order, and the peace and welfare of society, that external goods should be unequal, happiness is not made to consist in these, ver. 49. But notwithstanding that inequality, the balance of happiness among mankind is kept even by Providence, by the two passions of hope and fear, ver. 67. III. What the happiness of individuals is, as far as is consistent with the constitution of this world; and that the good man has here the advantage, ver. 77. The error of imputing to virtue what are only the calamities of nature, or of fortune, ver. 93. IV. The folly of expecting that God should alter his general laws in favour of particulars, ver. 121. V. That we are not judges who are good; but that whoever they are, they must be happiest, ver. 131, &c. VI. That external goods are not the proper rewards, but often inconsistent with, or destructive of virtue, ver. 167. That even these can make no man happy without virtue: instanced in riches, ver. 185. Honours, ver. 193. Nobility, ver. 205. Greatness, ver. 217. Fame, ver. 237. Superior talents, ver. 259, &c. With pictures of human infelicity in men possessed of them all, ver. 269, &c. VII. That virtue only constitutes a happiness whose object is universal, and whose prospect eternal, ver. 309. That the perfection of virtue and happiness consists in a conformity to the order of Providence here, and a resignation to it here and hereafter, ver. 327, &c.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

EPISTLE IV.

O HAPPINESS! our being's end and aim,[1]
Good, pleasure, ease, content! whate'er thy name:
That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die;
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
O'erlooked, seen double by the fool and wise:[2]
Plant of celestial seed! if dropped below,[3]
Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow?[4]
Fair op'ning to some court's propitious shine,[5]
Or deep with diamonds in the flaming[6] mine?

[1] Happiness is with Pope the sole end of life, and virtue is only a means. The means cannot be more binding than the end, and happiness is not obligatory and virtue is. A certain contempt, again, for pain and privation is heroic, but indifference to moral worth is degradation. Thus virtue is plainly an end in itself, and is superior, not subordinate, to happiness.

[2] Overlooked in the things which would yield it, and in other things magnified by the imagination, as is happily expressed by Young, when he says, Universal Passion, Sat. i., 238:

None think the great unhappy but the great.

[3] Pope personified happiness at the beginning, but seems to have dropped that idea in the seventh line, where the deity is suddenly transformed into a plant, from whence this metaphor of a vegetable is carried on through the eleven succeeding lines till he suddenly returns to consider happiness again as a person, in the eighteenth line.—WARTON.

The change from a person to a thing commences at the third verse, where Pope calls happiness "that something," and he changes back to the person in the eighth verse, where he addresses happiness as "thou."

[4] MS.:

O happiness! to which we all aspire,
Winged with strong hope, and borne with full desire;
That good, we still mistake, and still pursue,
Still out of reach, yet ever in our view;
That ease, for which in want, in wealth we sigh,
That ease, for which we labour and we die;
Tell me, ye sages, (sure 'tis yours to know)
Tell in what mortal soul this ease may grow

[5] "Is there," asks Mr. Croker, "any other authority for shine as a noun?" The noun is found in Milton, and Locke, and in much earlier writers, but Johnson says, "it is a word, though not unanalogical, yet ungraceful, and little used."

[6] "Flaming" is not an appropriate epithet for mines. The line calls up a false idea of splendour, and not a vision of subterranean gloom and desolation.

Digitized by Google

Twined with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
Or reaped in iron harvests of the field?[1]
Where grows!—where grows it not?[2] If vain our toil,
We ought to blame the culture, not the soil:[3]
Fixed to no spot is happiness sincere,[4]
'Tis no where to be found, or ev'ry where:
'Tis never to be bought, but always free;
And, fled from monarchs, St. John! dwells with thee.[5]
Ask of the learn'd the way! The learn'd are blind;
This bids to serve, and that to shun mankind;
Some place the bliss in action,[6] some in ease,[7]
Those call it pleasure, and contentment these;

[1] Dryden, Æn. xii. 963:

An iron harvest mounts, and still remains
to mow.—WAKEFIELD.

Pope's image is not sufficiently distinctive. There is only one word, the epithet "iron," to indicate that he is speaking of military renown, and this epithet, drawn from the material of which swords are made, is also applicable to the sickle.

[2] "Say in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow," is the invocation addressed by Pope to Happiness. He now strangely answers his own inquiry in a tone of rebuke, as though it were preposterous to ask the question. "Where grows! where grows it not?"

[3] These lines follow in the MS.:

Heav'n plants no vain desire in human kind,
But what it prompts to seek, directs to find,
From whom, so strongly pointing at the end,
To hide the means it never could intend.
Now since, whatever happiness we call,
Subsists not in the good of one, but all,
And whosoever would be blessed must bless,
Virtue alone can form that happiness.

A sentence in Hooker's Eccl. Pol., Book i. Chap. viii. Sect. 7, will explain Pope's idea in the last four lines: "If I cannot but wish to receive all good at every man's hand, how should I look to have any part of my desire satisfied, unless myself be careful to satisfy the like desire in other men?"

[4] "Sincere" in its present use is the opposite of "disingenuous," "deceptive," and has always a moral signification. Formerly it had the sense, which Pope gives it here, of "pure," "unadulterated," without any necessary ethical meaning. Thus Dryden, Palamon and Arcite, Bk. iii.

And none can boast sincere felicity.

Philemon Holland talks of "sincere vermillion," Arbuthnot of "sincere acid," and Hooker speaks of keeping the Scriptures "entire and sincere."

[5] This was flattery. Bolingbroke was notoriously a prey to factious rancour, and the pangs of disappointed ambition.

[6] Epicureans.—POPE.

[7] Stoics.—POPE.

Pope's account of the epicureans is the exact opposite of the truth. He says they "placed bliss in action," whereas Seneca tells us, Benef. iv. 4: "Quæ maxima Epicuro felicitas videtur, nihil agit." The poet's account of the stoics is equally wrong. Instead of placing "bliss in ease" they inculcated the sternest self-denial, and untiring efforts to fulfil all virtue.

Digitized by Google

Some sunk to beasts find pleasure end in pain;[1]
Some swelled to gods confess e'en virtue vain;[2]
Or indolent, to each extreme they fall,
To trust in ev'ry thing, or doubt of all.[3]
Who thus define it, say they more or less
Than this, that happiness is happiness?[4]
Take nature's path,[5] and mad opinion's leave;
All states can reach it, and all heads conceive;
Obvious her goods, in no extreme they dwell;[6]
There needs but thinking right, and meaning well;[7]

Happiness is the end of all men, and attainable by all.

[1] Epicureans.—POPE.

[2] Stoics.—POPE.

The true stoic did not, as Pope asserts, "confess virtue vain." He contended that it was all-sufficient. Till the edition of 1743 this couplet was as follows:

One grants his pleasure is but rest from pain;
One doubts of all; one owns ev'n virtue vain.

The two lines which conclude the paragraph, and which first appeared in the edition of 1743, were written at Warburton's suggestion. The object of the addition was to represent the credulous man who trusted everything as equally deceived with the sceptic who trusted in nothing. Of the last line there is a second version:

One trusts the senses, and one doubts of all.

[3] Sceptics.—POPE.

Pyrrho and his followers held that we can only know things as they appear, and not as they are. Thence they maintained that appearances must be absolutely indifferent, and that we could be equally happy in all conditions,—in sickness, for instance, Cicero, Fin. ii. 13, as in health. The one reality which Pyrrho admitted was virtue, and this he said (Cicero, Fin. iv. 16), was the supreme good which he who possessed had nothing left to desire.

[4] Pope's complaint, that the directions of the ancient moralists amounted to no more than that "happiness is happiness," arose from his ignorance of their tenets. The stoics and sceptics placed the supreme good in unconditional virtue, and the epicureans taught the precise doctrine of Pope himself, that pleasure is the goal, and virtue the road. The admonition, "take nature's path," which Pope would substitute for the teaching of these sects, was the maxim on which they all insisted.

[5] Pope has here adopted the sentiments of the Grecian sage who said, "That if we live according to nature we shall never be poor, and if we live according to opinion we shall never be rich."—RUFFHEAD.

For opinion creates the fantastic wants of fashion and luxury.

[6] He means that happiness does not "dwell" in any "extreme" of wealth, rank, talent, etc., but that all "states," or classes of men "can reach it."

[7] MS.:

True happiness, 'tis sacred truth I tell,
Lies but in thinking, &c.

The man who always "thinks right" is infallible in wisdom, and if he always "means well" he must act in obedience to his infallible convictions, when he will also be impeccable. There needs but this, says Pope, to

Digitized by Google

And mourn our various portions as we please,
Equal is common sense,[1] and common ease.[2]
God governs by general not particular laws; intends happiness to be equal, and to be so it must be social, since all particular happiness depends on general.
Remember, man, "the Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws;"
And makes what happiness we justly call,[3]
Subsist, not in the good of one, but all.
There's not a blessing individuals find,
But some way leans and hearkens[4] to the kind;[5]
No bandit fierce, no tyrant mad with pride,
No caverned hermit rests self-satisfied:
Who most to shun or hate mankind pretend,
Seek an admirer, or would fix a friend.
Abstract what others feel, what others think,
All pleasures sicken, and all glories sink:
Each has his share; and who would more obtain,
Shall find the pleasure pays not half the pain.[6]

secure happiness. He scoffs at the vague definitions of philosophers, and substitutes the luminous direction that we should be infallible in our views, and impeccable in our conduct.

[1] "The common sense" and "common ease" of which all the world have an equal share, cannot exceed the measure of sense and ease which falls to the lot of the most foolish and suffering of mankind. This is the same sort of equality that there is between the income of a pauper and a millionaire, since both have half-a-crown a week.

[2] The MS. adds:

In no extreme lies real happiness,
Not ev'n of good or wisdom in excess.

"Good" and "wisdom" in the last line might be supposed to mean something that was not true wisdom and goodness if Pope had not argued, ver. 259-268, that real wisdom was injurious to happiness. He would have the "right thinking" alloyed with error, and the "meaning well" with evil.

[3] That is, all which can "justly" or rightly be termed happiness.

[4] The image is drawn from a person leaning towards another, and listening to what he says. Pope took the expression from the simile of the compasses in Donne's Songs and Sonnets:

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

[5] The MS. goes on thus:

'Tis not in self it can begin and end,
The bliss of one must with another blend:
The strongest, noblest pleasures of the mind
All hold of mutual converse with the kind.
Can sensual lust, or selfish rapine, know
Such as from bounty, love, or mercy flow?
Of human nature wit its worst may write,
We all revere it in our own despite.

[6] This couplet follows in the MS.:

To rob another's is to lose our own,
And the just bound once passed the whole is gone.

Digitized by Google

Order is heav'n's first law; and this confessed,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise; but who infers from hence
That such are happier, shocks all common sense.[1]
Heav'n to mankind impartial we confess,
If all are equal in their happiness:
But mutual wants this happiness increase;
All nature's diff'rence keeps all nature's peace.
Condition, circumstance is not the thing;
Bliss is the same in subject or in king,
In who obtain defence, or who defend,
In him who is, or him who finds a friend:
Heav'n breathes through ev'ry member of the whole
One common blessing, as one common soul.
But fortune's gifts if each alike possessed,
And each were equal, must not all contest?
If then to all men happiness was meant,
God in externals could not place content.[2]

It is necessary for order, and the common peace, that external goods be unequal, therefore happiness is not constituted in these.

Fortune her gifts may variously dispose,
And these be happy called, unhappy those;
But heav'n's just balance equal will appear,
While those are placed in hope, and these in fear:[3]

The balance of human happiness kept equal, notwithstanding externals,

[1] MS.:

inference if you make,
That such are happier, 'tis a gross mistake.
Say not, "Heav'n's here profuse, there poorly saves,
And for one monarch makes a thousand slaves;"
You'll find when causes and their ends are known,
'Twas for the thousand heav'n has made that one.
Ev'n mutual want to common blessings tends,
One labours, one directs, and one defends,
While double pay benevolence receives,
Is blessed in what it takes, and what it gives.
In what (heav'n's hand impartial to confess)
Need men be equal but in happiness.
The bliss of all, if heav'n's indulgent aim,
He could not place in riches, pow'r or fame.
In these suppose it placed, one greatly blessed,
Others were hurt, impoverished, or oppressed;
Or did they equally on all descend,
If all were equal must not all contend?

[2] After ver. 66 in the MS.

'Tis peace of mind alone is at a stay:
The rest mad fortune gives or takes away:
All other bliss by accident's debarred,
But virtue's, in the instant, a reward;
In hardest trials operates the best,
And more is relished as the more distressed.
—WARBURTON.

There is still another couplet in the MS.:

Virtue's plain consequence is happiness,
Or virtue makes the disappointment less.

[3] The exemplification of this truth,

Digitized by Google

by hope an fear.

Not present good or ill, the joy or curse,
But future views of better, or of worse.[1]
O sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,
By mountains piled on mountains, to the skies?[2]
Heav'n still[3] with laughter the vain toil surveys,[4]
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.[5]

In what the happiness of individuals consists, and that the good man has the advantage even in this world.

Know, all the good that individuals find,
Or God and nature[6] meant to mere mankind,[7]
Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense,
Lie in three words, health, peace, and competence.[8]

by a view of the equality of happiness in the several particular stations of life, was designed for the subject of a future Epistle.—POPE.

"Heaven's just balance" is made "equal," says this writer, because men are harassed with fears in proportion to their elevation, and amused with hopes in a state of distress. But a man may be good either in high or low rank; and God does not, to make the happiness of mankind equal, fill the heart of one with idle fears, and of the other with chimerical hopes.—CROUSAZ.

[1] Sir W. Temple, Works, vol. iii. p. 531: "Whether a good condition with fear of being ill, or an ill with hope of being well, pleases or displeases most." Pope's MS. goes on thus:

How widely then at happiness we aim
By selfish pleasures, riches, pow'r or fame!
Increase of these is but increase of pain,
Wrong the materials, and the labour vain.

[2] He had in his mind Virgil's description, borrowed from Homer, of the attempt made by the giants, in their war against the gods, to scale the heavens by heaping Ossa upon Pelion, and Olympus upon Ossa. Pope took the expressions "sons of earth," and "mountains piled on mountains," from Dryden's translation, Geor. i. 374.

[3] "Still" is repeated to give force to the remonstrance. "Attempt still to rise, and Heaven will still survey your vain toil with laughter."

[4] An allusion to Psalm ii. 1, 4: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."—WAKEFIELD.

[5] MS.:

The gods with laughter on the labour gaze,
And bury such in the mad heaps they raise.

[6] "Nature" is a name for the second causes, or instruments, by which God works. Pope speaks as if nature's meaning was distinct from the meaning of God.

[7] By "mere mankind" Pope means man in his present earthly condition, and not the generality of mankind as distinguished from favoured mortals, for he says, ver. 77, that individuals can no more attain to any greater good than mankind at large.

[8] From Bolingbroke, Fragment 52: "Agreeable sensations, the series whereof constitutes happiness, must arise from health of body, tranquillity of mind, and a competency of wealth."

Digitized by Google

But health consists with temperance alone;
And peace! O virtue! peace is all thy own.[1]
The good or bad the gifts of fortune gain;
But these less taste them, as they worse obtain.[2]
Say, in pursuit of profit or delight,
Who risk the most, that[3] take wrong means or right?
Of vice or virtue, whether blessed or cursed,
Which meets contempt, or which compassion first?[4]
Count all th' advantage prosp'rous vice attains,
'Tis but what virtue flies from and disdains:
And grant the bad what happiness they would,
One they must want,[5] which is to pass for good.[6]
O blind to truth, and God's whole scheme below,
Who fancy bliss to vice,[7] to virtue woe!
Who sees and follows that great scheme the best,
Best knows the blessing, and will most be blessed.
But fools the good alone unhappy call,
For ills or accidents that chance to all.
See Falkland dies, the virtuous and the just!
See god-like Turenne prostrate on the dust!

That no man is unhappy through virtue.

[1] The MS. adds,

Behold the blessing then to none denied
But through our vice, by error or by pride;
Which nothing but excess can render vain,
And then lost only when too much we gain.

[2] The sense of this ill-expressed line is, that bad men taste the gifts of fortune less than good men, in proportion as they obtain them by worse means. The couplet was originally thus in the MS.:

The good, the bad may fortune's gifts possess;
The bad acquire them worse, enjoy them less.

[3] "That" is put improperly for "those that."

[4] MS.:

Secure to find, ev'n from the very worst,
If vice and virtue want, compassion first.

[5] But are not the one frequently mistaken for the other? How many profligate hypocrites have passed for good?—WARTON.

Men not intrinsically virtuous have often had the good opinion of the world; the happiness they want is a good conscience.

[6] After ver. 92 in the MS.:

Let sober moralists correct their speech,
No bad man's happy: he is great, or rich.
—WARBURTON.

[7] That is, "who fancy bliss allotted to vice."

Digitized by Google

See Sidney bleeds amid the martial strife!
Was this their virtue, or contempt of life?[1]
Say, was it virtue, more though heav'n ne'er gave,
Lamented Digby![2] sunk thee to the grave?[3]
Tell me, if virtue made the son expire,
Why, full of days and honour, lives the sire?[4]
Why drew Marseilles' good bishop[5] purer breath,
When nature sickened, and each gale was death?[6]

[1] Lord Falkland was killed by a musket ball at the battle of Newbury, Sept. 20, 1643. Turenne was killed by a cannon ball, near Sassback, July 26, 1675. Sir Philip Sidney was mortally wounded by a bullet at Zutphen, Sept. 22, 1586, and died a few days afterwards. Sidney was 32 years of age at his death, Falkland 33, and Turenne 64.

[2] The Hon. Robert Digby, who died, aged 40, April 19, 1726. Pope wrote his epitaph.

[3] MS. :

Brave Sidney falls amid the martial strife,
Not that he's virtuous, but profuse of life.
Not virtue snatched Arbuthnot's hopeful bloom,
And sent thee, Craggs, untimely to the tomb.
Say not 'tis virtue, but too soft a frame,
That Walsh his race, and Scud'more ends her name.
Think not their virtues, more though heav'n ne'er gave,
Unites so many Digbys in a grave.
Fierce love, not virtue, Falkland, was thy doom,
Her grief, not virtue, nipped Louisa's bloom.

The Arbuthnot mentioned here was Charles, a clergyman, and son of the celebrated physician. His death in 1732 was supposed to have been occasioned by the lingering effects of a wound he received in a duel he fought while at Oxford with a fellow-collegian, his rival in love. James Craggs died of the small-pox Feb. 14, 1721, aged 35. Virtue had certainly no share in his death, for he was licentious in private life, and in his public capacity accepted a bribe from the South Sea directors. Walsh died in 1708, at the age of 49. His virtue may be estimated by his confession that he had committed every folly in love, except matrimony. Lady Scudamore, widow of Sir James Scudamore, and daughter of the fourth Lord Digby, died of the small-pox, May 3, 1729, aged 44. She left only a daughter, who married, and hence Pope's expression, "Scud'more ends her name." The many Digbys united in one grave were the children of the fifth Lord, the father of the poet's friend, Robert. I do not know what is meant by the "fierce love" which was Falkland's "doom," nor can I identify the Louisa who died of grief.

[4] William, fifth Lord Digby, was 74 when this fourth Epistle was published in 1734, and he lived to be 92. He died December 1752.

[5] M. de Belsunce, was made bishop of Marseilles in 1709. In the plague of that city in 1720 he distinguished himself by his activity. He died at a very advanced age in 1755.—WARTON.

[6] Some anonymous verses in Dryden's Miscellanies, vi. p. 76 :

When nature sickens, and with fainting breath
Struggles beneath the bitter pangs of death.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Or why so long (in life if long can be)[1]
Lent heav'n a parent to the poor and me?[2]
What makes all physical or moral ill?
There deviates nature, and here wanders will.
God sends not ill, if rightly understood,
Or partial ill is universal good,
Or change admits, or nature lets it fall
Short, and but rare, till man improved it all.[3]
We just as wisely might of heav'n complain,
That righteous Abel was destroyed by Cain,
As that the virtuous son is ill at ease
When his lewd father gave the dire disease.

[1] Dryden, Virg. x. 1231:

O Rhœbus! we have lived too long for me,
If life and long were terms that could agree.
—WAKEFIELD.

[2] MS.:

Yet hemmed with plagues, and breathing deathful air,
Marseilles' good bishop still possess the chair;
And long kind chance, or heav'n's more kind decree,
Lends an old parent, etc.

Pope's mother died June 7, 1733. She was said by the poet to be 93, but was only 91, if the register of her baptism, June 18, 1642, gives the year of her birth, which is doubtless the case, since an elder sister was baptised in 1641, and a younger in 1643.

[3] How change can admit, or nature let fall any evil, however short and rare it may be, under the government of an all-wise, powerful, and benevolent Creator, is hardly to be understood. These six lines are perhaps the most exceptionable in the whole poem in point both of sentiment and expression.—WARTON.

Pope's justification of the partial ill which is not a general good is, in substance, that Providence has not supreme dominion over his physical laws, that change and nature act independently of him, and vitiate his work. In place of ver. 113—16 the earlier editions have this couplet:

God sends not ill, 'tis nature lets it fall,
Or chance escape, and man improves it all.

The notion that the disturbing operations of "chance" could explain the existence of evil was intrinsically absurd, and inconsistent with Ep. i., ver. 290, where Pope says that "all chance is direction." Chance is, in strictness, a nonentity, and merely signifies that the cause of an effect is unknown to us, or beyond our control. Neither supposition could apply to the Almighty. Warburton quotes a couplet from the MS., which could not be retained without a glaring contradiction, when Pope had discovered two other evil-doers besides man, — nature and chance:

Of every evil, since the world began
The real source is not in God, but man.

Digitized by Google

Think we, like some weak prince, th' Eternal Cause,
Prone for his fav'rites to reverse his laws?[1]
Shall burning Ætna, if a sage requires,[2]
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?[3]
On air or sea new motions be impressed,[4]
O blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?[5]
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease if you go by?[6]

[1] This comparison of the favourites of the Almighty to the favourites of a weak prince is fallacious and revolting. Weak princes select their favourities from weak or vicious motives. The favourites of heaven are the righteous.

[2] Warburton says that Pope alluded to Empedocles. The story ran that he pretended to be a divinity, and threw himself into the crater of Ætna, that nobody might know what had become of him, and might conclude that he had been carried up into heaven. All the circumstances of his death are doubtful, and whether he was a calumniated sage, or a conceited madman, legends are not a proper illustration of God's dealings with mankind. Pope had originally written,

T' explore Vesuvius if great Pliny aims,
Shall the loud mountain call back all its flames?

At the eruption of Vesuvius in 79, Pliny, the naturalist, was commanding the Roman fleet in the Gulf of Naples. He made for the coast in the neighbourhood of the volcano, till checked by the falling stones and ashes, he sailed to Stabiæ, and landed. In a few hours the tottering of the houses, shaken by the earthquake, warned him to fly, and according to his nephew he was overtaken by flames and sulphurous vapours, and suffocated. Stabiæ is ten miles from Vesuvius, and the flame and vapour could hardly have been propelled from the mountain.

[3] The forgetfulness to thunder supposes unconscious obliviousness, the recalling the fires conscious activity. The mountain would not at the same moment forget to keep up the irruption, and remember to restrain it.

[4] Wollaston, Religion of Nature, sect. v. prop. 18: "If a man's safety should depend upon winds or rains, must new motions be impressed upon the atmosphere?"

[5] Warton tells us in a note on one of Pope's letters to Bethel, that the latter was "celebrated in two fine lines in the Essay on Man on account of an asthma with which he was afflicted." I find in Ruffhead's Life a quotation from a letter of Pope's to Bethel, "then in Italy," and we may conclude that Bethel, being troubled with an asthma, visited Italy for relief, but that in crossing the sea the "motions of the sea and air" disagreed with him, as they do with most people.—CROKER.

[6] "You," is Bolingbroke, to whom the epistle is addressed. A writer in the Adventurer, No. 63, quotes Wollaston, Religion of Nature, sect. v. prop. 18: "If a good man be passing by an infirm building, just in the article of falling, can it be expected that God should suspend the force of gravitation till he is gone by, in order to his deliverance?" The illustrations and language Pope copied from Wollaston

Digitized by Google

Or some old temple nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?
But still this world, so fitted for the knave,
Contents us not. A better shall we have?
A kingdom of the just then let it be:[2]
But first consider how those just agree.
The good must merit God's peculiar care;
But who, but God, can tell us who they are?
One thinks on Calvin heav'n's own Spirit fell;
Another deems him instrument of hell;
If Calvin feel heav'n's blessing, or its rod,
This cries there is, and that, there is no God.[3]
What shocks one part will edify the rest,[4]
Nor with one system can they all be blessed.[5]
The very best will variously incline,[6]
And what rewards your virtue, punish mine.

are the objections of those who deny a special Providence, and Wollaston only stated the arguments to refute them.

[1] MS.:

Or shall some ruin, as it nods to fall,
For Chartres' brains reserve the hanging wall?
No,—in a scene far higher heav'n imparts
Rewards for spotless hands, and honest hearts.

The last couplet is a direct acknowledgment of a future state, and was probably omitted to avoid contradicting the infidel tenets of Bolingbroke.

[2] Christians have never raised the objection. They only say that since this world is not a kingdom of the just, reason, as well as revelation, teaches that there must be a kingdom to come.

[3] Bolingbroke, Fragment 57: "Christian divines complain that good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy. They establish a rule, and are not agreed about the application of it; for who are to be reputed good christians? Go to Rome, they are papists. Go to Geneva, they are calvinists. If particular providences are favourable to those of your communion they will be deemed unjust by every good protestant, and God will be taxed with encouraging idolatry and superstition. If they are favourable to those of any of our communions they will be deemed unjust by every good papist, and God will be taxed with nursing up heresy and schism."

[4] MS.:

This way, I fear, your project too must fall,
Will just what serves one good man serve 'em all?

[5] After ver. 142 in some editions:

Give each a system, all must be at strife;
What diff'rent systems for a man and wife?
—WARBURTON.

[6] Young, Universal Passion, Sat. iii. 61.

The very best ambitiously advise.

MS.:

The best in habits variously incline.

Digitized by Google

Whatever is, is right.[1] This world, 'tis true,
Was made for Cæsar, but for Titus too:[2]
And which more bless'd? who chained his country, say,
Or he whose virtue sighed to lose a day?[3]
"But sometimes virtue starves, while vice is fed."
What then? Is the reward of virtue bread?[4]
That vice may merit, 'tis the price of toil;[5]
The knave deserves it when he tills the soil,
The knave deserves it when he tempts the main,
Where folly fights for kings, or dives for gain.[6]
The good man may be weak, be indolent;
Nor is his claim to plenty, but content.
But grant him riches, your demand is o'er?
"No—shall the good want health, the good want pow'r?"
Add health, and pow'r, and ev'ry earthly thing:
"Why bounded pow'r? why private? why no king?"[7]

[1] MS.:

E'en leave it as it is; this world, etc.

[2] He alludes to the complaint of Cato in Addison's tragedy, Act. iv. Sc. 4:

Justice gives way to force: the conquered world
Is Cæsar's; Cato has no business in it

And Act v. Sc. 1:

This world was made for Cæsar.

"If," says Pope, "the world is made for ambitious men, such as Cæsar, it is also made for good men, like Titus." Extreme cases test principles, and to establish his position, that the virtuous in this life have always a larger share of enjoyments than the worldly, Pope should have dealt with some of the numerous instances in which the good have been condemned to tortures in consequence of their goodness.

[3] Remembering one evening that he had given nothing during the day, Titus exclaimed, "My friends, I have lost a day."

[4] Unquestionably it must be one of the rewards if Pope is right in maintaining that present happiness is proportioned to virtue. No more cruel mockery could be conceived than to act on his doctrine, and tell a virtuous mother, surrounded by starving children, that she and her little ones were quite as happy as the families who lived in abundance.

[5] MS.:

Can God be just if virtue be unfed?
Why, fool, is the reward of virtue bread?
'Tis his who labours, his who sows the plain,
'Tis his who threshes, or who grinds the grain.

[6] The MS. has two readings:

Where madness fights for tyrants or for gain.
Where folly fights for kings or drowns for gain.

In the early editions Pope adopted the first version; in the later the second, with the change of "dives" for "drowns."

[7] "Why no king?" is equivalen to "why is he not any king?" The proper form would be "why not a king?"

Digitized by Google

Nay, why external for internal giv'n?
Why is not man a god, and earth a heav'n?"[1]
Who ask and reason thus, will scarce conceive
God gives enough while he has more to give:[2]
Immense the pow'r, immense were the demand;
Say, at what part of nature will they stand?
What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy,
Is virtue's prize. A better would you fix?
Then give humility a coach and six,[3]
Justice a conqu'ror's sword, or truth a gown,[4]
Or public spirit its great cure,[5] a crown.[6]
Weak, foolish man! will heav'n[7] reward us there,[8]
With the same trash mad mortals wish for here?

That external goods are not the proper rewards of virtue, often inconsistent with, or destructive of it; but that all these can make no man happy without virtue. In-

[1] MS.:

Then give him this, and that, and everything:
Still the complaint subsists; he is no king.
Outward rewards for inward worth are odd:
Why then complain not that he is no god?

Ver. 162 in the text is inconsistent with ver. 161. Pope supposes the good to rise in their demands until they rebel against receiving external rewards for internal merits, and insist that man should be a god, and earth a heaven, which heaven is one of the externals they have just indignantly repudiated.

[2] Pope is speaking of the good, and what good man ever did "ask and reason" according to Pope's representation?

[3] In a work of so serious a cast surely such strokes of levity, of satire, of ridicule, as also lines 204, 223, 276, however poignant and witty, are ill-placed and disgusting, are violations of that propriety which Pope in general so strictly observed.—WARTON.

[4] MS.:

But come, for virtue the just payment fix,
For humble merit say a coach and six,
For justice a Lord Chancellor's awful gown,
&c.

Pope showed his consciousness of the weakness of his cause by raising false issues. Virtue would not be rewarded by swords, gowns, and coaches, but is it rewarded by the cross, the stake, the rack, and the dungeon?

[5] This sarcasm was directed against George II. When Prince of Wales he quarrelled with his father, and patronised the opposition. On his accession to the throne he abandoned the opposition, to which Pope's friends belonged, and retained the ministers of George I.

[6] After ver. 172 in the MS.:

Say, what rewards this idle world imparts,
Or fit for searching heads or honest hearts.
—WARBURTON.

[7] Heaven in this line has either improperly the double sense of a person and a place,—the God of heaven, and the kingdom of the blessed—or else "there" is a clumsy tautological excrescence to furnish a rhyme.

[8] These eight succeeding lines were not in former editions; and indeed none of them, especially lines 177 and

Digitized by Google

stances in each of them.

The boy and man an individual makes,[1]
Yet sigh'st thou now for apples and for cakes?
Go, like the Indian, in another life
Expect thy dog, thy bottle, and thy wife,
As well as dream such trifles are assigned,
As toys and empires, for a god-like mind:
Rewards, that either would to virtue bring
No joy, or be destructive of the thing:
How oft by these at sixty are undone
The virtues of a saint at twenty-one!

1. Riches.

To whom can riches give repute or trust,[2]
Content, or pleasure, but the good and just?[3]
Judges and senates have been bought for gold,
Esteem and love were never to be sold.[4]
O fool! to think God hates the worthy mind,
The lover and the love of human kind,[5]
Whose life is healthful, and whose conscience clear,
Because he wants a thousand pounds a year.[6]

2. Honours.

Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honour lies.

179, do any credit to the author.—WARTON.

From Warton's note it would appear that the lines were first printed in his own edition in 1797, whereas they were published in Pope's edition of 1743. The poet had then renounced Bolingbroke for Warburton, and ventured to admit that there was a heaven reserved for man.

[1] The "boy and man makes an individual" is not grammar.

[2] Thus till the edition of 1743:

For riches, can they give, but to the just,
His own contentment, or another's trust?

[3] We see in the world, alas! too many examples of riches giving repute and trust, content and pleasure to the worthless and profligate.—WARTON.

[4] Dryden:

Let honour and preferment go for gold,
But glorious beauty isn't to be sold.

The MS. adds:

Were health of mind and body purchased here,
'Twere worth the cost; all else is bought too dear.

[5] The man, that is, who is the lover of human kind, and the object of their love.

[6] No rational believer in Providence ever did suppose that to have less than a thousand a year was a mark of God's hatred, or ever doubted that the sufferings of good men in this life were consistent with the dispensations of wisdom and mercy. Pope began by undertaking to prove that happiness was independent of externals, and drops into the separate and indubitable proposition that

Digitized by Google

Fortune in men has some small diff'rence made,
One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade;[1]
The cobbler aproned,[2] and the parson gowned,
The friar hooded, and the monarch crowned.
"What differ more," you cry, "than crown and cowl?"
I'll tell you, friend; a wise man and a fool.[3]
You'll find, if once the monarch acts the monk,[4]
Or, cobbler-like, the parson will be drunk,
Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
The rest is all but leather or prunella.[5]
Stuck o'er with titles, and hung round with strings,[6] 205 a. Titles
That thou may'st be by kings, or whores of kings:[7]

earthly happiness and the blessing of God are not dependent upon the possession of a thousand a year.

[1] This seems not to be proper; the words "flaunt" and "flutter" might with more propriety have changed places.—JOHNSON.

The satirical aggravation here is conducted with great dexterity by an interchange of terms: the gaudy word "flaunt" properly belongs to the sumptuous dress, and that of "flutter" to the tattered garment.—WAKEFIELD.

Wakefield did not perceive that the language no longer fitted the facts; for though flimsy rags flutter, the stiff brocade did not. Pope avoided the inconsistency in his first draught:

Oft of two brothers one shall be surveyed
Flutt'ring in rags, one flaunting in brocade.

[2] This must be understood as if Pope had written, "The cobbler is aproned."

[3] MS.:

What differs more, you cry, than gown and hood?
A wise man and a fool, a bad and good.

The miserable rhyme in the text had the authority of a pun in Shakespeare, 3 Henry VI. Act v. Sc. 6:

Why what a peevish fool was that of Crete
That taught his son the office of a fowl?
And yet, for all his wings, the fool was drowned.

[4] He alluded to Philip V. of Spain, who resigned his crown to his son, Jan. 10, 1724, and retired to a monastery. The son died in August, and on Sept. 5, 1724, Philip reascended the throne. Weak-minded, hard-hearted, superstitious, and melancholy mad, he was a just instance of a man who owed all his consideration to the trappings of royalty.

[5] That is, the rest is mere outside appearance,—the leather of the cobbler's apron, or the prunella of the clergyman's gown. Prunella was a species of woollen stuff.

[6] *Cordon* is the French term for the ribbon of the orders of knighthood; but in England the ribbons are never called "strings," nor would Pope have used the term unless he had wanted a rhyme for "kings." The concluding phrase of the couplet was aimed at the supposed influence of the mistresses of George II.

[7] Cowley, Translation of Hor. Epist. i. 10:

To kings or to the favourites of kings.—HURD.

Digitized by Google

4. Birth.

Boast the pure blood of an illustrious race,
In quiet flow from Lucrece to Lucrece:[1]
But by your fathers' worth if yours you rate,
Count me those only who were good and great.
Go! if your ancient, but ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood,[2]
Go! and pretend your family is young;
Nor own your fathers have been fools so long.
What can ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards.[4]

5. Greatness.

Look next on greatness; say where greatness lies.
"Where but among the heroes and the wise!"
Heroes are much the same, the point's agreed,
From Macedonia's madman[5] to the Swede;

[1] In the MS. thus:

The richest blood, right-honourably old,
Down from Lucretia to Lucretia rolled,
May swell thy heart and gallop in thy breast,
Without one dash of usher or of priest:
Thy pride as much despise all other pride
As Christ-church once all colleges beside.—WARBURTON.

[2] A bad rhyme to the preceding word "race." It is taken from Boileau, Sat. v.:

Et si leur sang tout pur, ainsi que leur noblesse,
Est passé jusqu'à vous de Lucrèce en Lucrèce.—WARTON.

The bad rhyme did not appear till the edition of 1743. The couplet had previously stood as follows:

Thy boasted blood, a thousand years or so
May from Lucretia to Lucretia flow.

[3] Hall, Sat. iii.:

Or tedious bead rolls of descended blood,
From father Japhet since Deucalion's flood.
—WAKEFIELD.

[4] There are two other versions of this couplet in the MS.:

But to make wits of fools, and chiefs of cowards,
What can? not all the pride of all the Howards.

And,

But make one wise, or loved, or happy man,
Not all the pride of all the Howards can.

[5] Pope took the phrase from Mandeville, Fable of the Bees, vol. i., p. 26: "Who can forbear laughing when he thinks on all the great men that have been so serious on the subject of that Macedonian madman!" Warton protests against the application of the term to Alexander the Great, and adds that Charles XII. of Sweden "deserved not to be joined with him." The objection is well-founded, for Pope not only compared them in their rage for war, but said that neither "looked further than his nose," which was true of Charles XII., and false of Alexander, who mingled grand schemes of civilisation with his selfish lust of dominion.

Digitized by Google

The whole strange purpose of their lives to find,
Or make, an enemy of all mankind![1]
Not one looks backward, onward still he goes,[2]
Yet ne'er looks forward further than his nose.[3]
No less alike[4] the politic and wise;
All sly slow things,[5] with circumspective eyes:
Men in their loose unguarded hours they take,
Not that themselves are wise, but others weak.
But grant that those can conquer, these can cheat,
'Tis phrase absurd[6] to call a villain great:[7]
Who wickedly is wise, or madly brave,
Is but the more a fool, the more a knave.
Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or, failing, smiles in exile or in chains,
Like good Aurelius let him reign,[8] or bleed
Like Socrates,[9] that man is great indeed.

[1] "To find an enemy of all mankind," signifies to find some one who is an enemy of all mankind, whereas Pope means to say that heroes desire to find all mankind their enemies. He exaggerated the "strangeness" of the conqueror's "purpose." The making enemies is incidental to the purpose, but is not itself the end.

[2] The idea expressed in this line is put more clearly by Johnson in his description of Charles XII:

Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain,
"Think nothing gained," he cries, "till nought remain."

[3] There is something so familiar, nay even vulgar, in these two lines as renders them very unworthy of our author.—RUFFHEAD.

[4] That is, "the politic and wise" are "no less alike" than the heroes, of whom he had said, ver. 219, that they had all the same characteristics.

[5] Shakespeare, Richard II. Act i. Sc. 3. "The sly, slow hours."

[6] "'Tis phrase absurd" is one of those departures from pure English which would only be endurable in familiar poetry.

[7] The pronunciation of "great" was not uniform in Pope's day. "When I published," says Johnson, "the plan for my Dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word 'great' should be pronounced so as to rhyme to 'state,' and Sir William Yonge sent me word that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to 'seat,' and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it 'grait.'" Pope, in this epistle, and elsewhere, has made "great" rhyme to both sounds.

[8] Marcus Aurelius, who regulated his life by the lofty principles of the Stoics, was born A.D. 121 and died 180. The man, says Pope, who aims at noble ends by noble means is great, whether he attains his end or fails, whether he reigns like Aurelius or perishes like Socrates.

[9] Considering the manner in which Socrates was put to death, the word "bleed" seems to be improperly used.—WARTON.

Digitized by Google

6 Fame

What's fame? a fancied life in others' breath,[1]
A thing beyond us, ev'n before our death.[2]
Just what you hear, you have, and what's unknown
The same, my lord,[3] if Tully's, or your own.
All that we feel of it begins and ends
In the small circle of our foes or friends;[4]
To all beside as much an empty shade[5]
An Eugene living,[6] as a Cæsar dead;
Alike, or when or where they shone or shine,
Or on the Rubicon, or on the Rhine.
A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod;[7]
An honest man's[8] the noblest work of God.
Fame but from death a villain's name can save,[9]
As justice tears his body from the grave;
When what t' oblivion better were resigned,
Is hung on high, to poison half mankind.[10]

[1] Wollaston, Religion of Nature, sect. v. prop. 19: "Fame lives but in the breath of the people."

[2] Is depreciating the passion for fame consistent with the doctrine before advanced, Epist. ii. ver. 290, that "not a vanity is giv'n in vain?" —WARTON.

[3] This is said to Bolingbroke.

[4] Celebrated men are aware that their reputation spreads wide, and whether fame is valuable or worthless, "all that is felt of it" does not "begin and end in the small circle of friends and foes."

[5] The men of renown, — the Shakespeares, Bacons, and Newtons, —can never be "empty shades" while we have the works which were the fruit of their prodigious intellects. When the wealth of a great mind is preserved to posterity we possess a principal part of the man, and if in the next world he takes no cognisance of his fame in this, it is we that are the empty shades to him; he is a substance and a power to us.

[6] Wakefield says that "but for his political bias Pope would have written, 'A Marlb'rough living.'" But Marlborough died in 1722, and the point of Pope's line consisted in opposing the example of a living man to a dead.

[7] The "wit" is not to be taken here in its narrow modern sense of a jester. Pope is deriding fame in general, and divides famous men into two classes,—"heroes and the wise." The wise, such as Shakespeare, Bacon, and Newton, are compared to feathers, which are flimsy and showy; and the heroes, who are the scourges of mankind, are compared to rods.

[8] "Honest" was formerly used in a less confined sense than at present, but the word has never been adequate to designate "the noblest work of God."

[9] Pope has hitherto spoken of all fame. He now speaks of bad fame, and this was never supposed to be an element of happiness.

[10] He alludes to the disinterment

Digitized by Google

All fame is foreign, but of true desert;
Plays round the head, but comes not to the heart:
One self-approving hour whole years outweighs
Of stupid starers and of loud huzzas;
And more true joy Marcellus[1] exiled feels,
Than Cæsar with a senate at his heels.[2]
In parts superior[3] what advantage lies?
Tell, for you can, what is it to be wise?
'Tis but to know how little can be known;[4]
To see all others' faults, and feel our own;[5]
Condemned in bus'ness or in arts to drudge,
Without a second or without a judge:[6]

7. Superior parts.

of the bodies of Cromwell, Bradshaw, and Ireton on Jan. 30, 1661, the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. The putrid corpses were hung for the day upon a gibbet at Tyburn, were decapitated at night, and the heads fixed on the front of Westminster Hall. The trunks were buried in a hole dug near the gibbet.

[1] Marcellus was an opponent of Cæsar, and a partisan of Pompey. After the battle of Pharsalia he retired to Mitylene, was pardoned by Cæsar at the request of the senate, and assassinated by an attendant on his way back to Rome. His moral superiority over Cæsar is conjecture. Warton mentions that "by Marcellus Pope was said to mean the Duke of Ormond," a man of small abilities, and a tool of Bolingbroke and Oxford. He fled from England at the death of Queen Anne, joined the court of the Pretender, and being attainted had to pass the rest of his life abroad. He died at Madrid, Nov. 16, 1745, aged 94. One version of the couplet in the MS. has the names of Walpole, and the jacobite member of parliament, Shippen:

And more contentment honest Sh[ippen] feels
Than W[alpole] with a senate at his heels.

[2] So Lord Lansdowne of Cato:

More loved, more praised, more envied in his doom,
Than Cæsar trampling on the rights of Rome.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] "Superior parts" are ranked by Pope among "external goods," which is a palpable error. Nothing can be less external to a man than his mind.

[4] Which does not hinder our advancing with delight from truth to truth, nor are we depressed because, to quote Pope's language, Epist. i. ver. 71, "our knowledge is measured to our state and place."

[5] In the interests of charity, humility, and self-improvement, it were to be wished that this was the universal result of superior intelligence.

[6] Pope objects that wise men are "condemned to drudge," which is not an evil peculiar to the tasks of wise men, and so immensely does the pleasure of mental exercise preponderate over the weariness, that a taste for philosophy, letters, and science is one of the surest preservatives against the tedium of life. He objects that the wise have no one to second or judge them rightly, which never happens. The most neglected genius wins disciples from the beginning, who make up in

Digitized by Google

Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land?
All fear, none aid you, and few understand.[1]
Painful pre-eminence![2] yourself to view
Above life's weakness, and its comforts too.[3]
Bring then these blessings to a strict account;
Make fair deductions; see to what they 'mount:
How much of other each is sure to cost;
How each for other oft is wholly lost;
How inconsistent greater goods with these;
How sometimes life is risked, and always ease.
Think, and if still the things thy envy call,[4]
Say would'st thou be the man to whom they fall?
To sigh for ribbons if thou art so silly,
Mark how they grace Lord Umbra, or Sir Billy.[5]

weight what they want in number, and were the adherents fewer, the capacity which conceives important truths would be self-sustained from the consciousness that truth is mighty and will prevail.

[1] The allusion is to Bolingbroke's patriotic pretensions, and political impotence. The cause of his want of success is reversed by Pope. He was understood well enough, and nobody trusted him in consequence. His selfish, unprincipled ambition was too transparent.

[2] To a person that was praising Dr. Balguy's admirable discourses on the Vanity and Vexation of our Pursuits after Knowledge, he replied, "I borrowed the whole from ten lines of the Essay on Man, ver. 259—268, and I only enlarged upon what the poet had expressed with such marvellous conciseness, penetration, and precision." He particularly admired ver. 266.—WARTON.

The exclamation "painful pre-eminence," is from Addison's Cato, Act iii. Sc. 5, where Cato applies the phrase to his own situation.

[3] This line is inconsistent with ver. 261—2. A man who feels painfully his own ignorance and faults is not "above life's weakness." The line is also inconsistent with ver. 310. No one can be above life's weakness who is not transcendent in virtue, and then he cannot be above "life's comfort," since Pope says, that "virtue alone is happiness below." The melancholy picture, again, which the passage presents of the species of martyrdom endured by Bolingbroke from his intellectual pre-eminence, is incousistent with ver. 18, where Pope says that perfect happiness has fled from kings to dwell with St. John.

[4] "Call" for "call forth."

[5] Lord Umbra may have stood for a dozen insignificant peers who had the ribbon of some order. Sir Billy was Sir William Yonge, who was made a Knight of the Bath when the order was revived in May, 1725. "Without having done anything," says Lord Hervey, "out of the common track of a ductile courtier, and a parliamentary tool, his name was proverbially used to express everything pitiful, corrupt, and contemptible." His one talent was a fluency which sounded like eloquence,

Digitized by Google

Is yellow dirt the passion of thy life?
Look but on Gripus, or on Gripus' wife.[1]
If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind:[2]
Or ravished with the whistling of a name,[3]
See Cromwell, damned to everlasting fame![4]
If all, united, thy ambition call,
From ancient story learn to scorn them all.[5]
There, in the rich, the honoured, famed, and great,
See the false scale of happiness complete!
In hearts of kings, or arms of queens who lay,
How happy those to ruin,[6] these betray!

and meant nothing, and this ready flow of specious language, unaccompanied by solid reasoning or conviction, and always exerted on behalf of his patron, Walpole, rendered his unconditional subserviency conspicuous.

[1] Mr. Croker suggests that Gripus and his wife may be Mr. Wortley Montagu and Lady Mary. Pope accused them both of greed for money.

[2] Oldham:

The greatest, bravest, wittiest of mankind.
—Bowles.

[3] From Cowley, Translation of Virgil:

Charmed with the foolish whistlings of a name.—Hurd.

[4] This resembles some lines in Roscommon's Essay:

That wretch, in spite of his forgotten rhymes,
Condemned to live to all succeeding times.
—Wakefield.

Pope's examples would not bear out his language unless Bacon and Cromwell were generally reprobated, whereas both have distinguished champions and innumerable adherents.

[5] MS.:

In one man's fortune, mark and scorn them all.

The "ancient story" was a pretence which Pope inserted when he turned the invective against the Duke of Marlborough into a general satire upon a class.

[6] Mr. Croker asks "who was happy to ruin and betray?—the favourite or the sovereign?" The language is confused, but "their" in the next line refers to those who "ruin" and "betray," and shows that the favourites were meant. They were happy to ruin those—the kings, to betray these—the queens. The couplet made part of the attack upon the Duke of Marlborough, and the words of ver. 290 were borrowed from Burnet, who said in his defence of the Duke, "that he was in no contrivance to ruin or betray" James II. While, however, he was a trusted officer in the army of James he entered into a secret league with the Prince of Orange, and deserted to him on his landing. The accusation of lying in the arms of a queen, and afterwards betraying her, alludes, says Wakefield, to Marlborough's youthful intrigue with the Duchess of Cleveland, the mistress of

Digitized by Google

Mark by what wretched steps their glory grows,[1]
From dirt and sea-weed as proud Venice rose;
In each how guilt and greatness equal ran,[2]
And all that raised the hero sunk the man:[3]
Now Europe's laurel on their brows behold,
But stained with blood, or ill-exchanged for gold:
Then see them broke with toils, or sunk in ease,
Or infamous for plundered provinces.[4]
O wealth ill-fated! which no act of fame[5]
E'er taught to shine,[6] or sanctified from shame![7]

Charles II., and we need not reject the interpretation because the mistress of a king is not a queen, or because there is no ground for believing that Marlborough betrayed her. Pope constantly sacrificed accuracy of language to glitter of style, and historic truth to satirical venom.

[1] In the MS. "great * * grows," that is, great Churchill or Marlbro'.—CROKER.

[2] MS. :

One equal course how guilt and greatness ran.

[3] This couplet and the next have a view to his supposed peculation as commander-in-chief, and his prolongation of the war on this account.—WAKEFIELD.

The charges were the calumnies of an infuriated faction. His military career while he was commander-in-chief was free from reproach. He was never known to sanction an act of wanton harshness, or to exceed the recognised usages of war. The pretence that he prolonged the contest for the sake of gain does not require a refutation, for his accusers could never produce a fragment of colourable evidence in support of the allegation. The Duke of Wellington ridiculed the notion, and said that however much Marlborough might have loved money he must have loved his military reputation more. The poet, who denounced him as a man "stained with blood," and "infamous for plundered provinces," could, at ver. 100, call Turenne "god-like," though he gave the atrocious command to pillage and burn the Palatinate, and turned it into a smouldering desert. "Habit," says Sismondi, "had rendered him insensible to the sufferings of the people, and he subjected them to the most cruel inflictions."

[4] MS. :

Let gathered nations next their chief behold,
How blessed with conquest, yet more blessed with gold:
Go then, and steep thy age in wealth and ease,
Stretched on the spoils of plundered provinces.

[5] "Acts of fame" are not the best means of "sanctifying" wealth. True charity is unostentatious.

[6] Wakefield quotes Horace, Od. ii. 2, or, as Creech puts it in his translation, silver has no brightness,

Unless a moderate use refine,
A value give, and make it shine.

[7] Dryden, Virg. Æn. iv. 250 :

But called it marriage, by that specious name
To veil the crime, and sanctify the shame.
—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

What greater bliss attends their close of life?
Some greedy minion,[1] or imperious wife,
The trophied arches, storied halls[2] invade,
And haunt their slumbers in the pompous shade.[3]
Alas! not dazzled with their noon-tide ray,
Compute the morn and ev'ning to the day;
The whole amount of that enormous fame,
A tale, that blends their glory with their shame!
Know then this truth, enough for man to know,
"Virtue alone is happiness below."[4]
The only point where human bliss stands still,[5]
And tastes the good without the fall to ill;
Where only merit constant pay receives,
Is blessed in what it takes,[6] and what it gives;[7]

That virtue only constitutes a happiness whose object is universal, and whose prospect eternal.

[1] Originally, "Ambition, avarice, and th' imperious" etc., for Marlborough was never the dupe of a "greedy minion."

[2] "Storied halls" are halls painted with stories or histories, as in Milton, Il Penseroso, ver. 159:

> And storied windows richly dight
> Casting a dim religious light.

The walls and ceiling of the saloon at Blenheim are painted with figures and trophies, and some rooms are hung with tapestry commemorating the great sieges and battles of the Duke. The tapestry, which was manufactured in the Netherlands, and was a present from the Dutch, is described by Dyer in The Fleece, Book iii. ver. 499—517.

[3] Addison's Verses on the Play-House:

> A lofty fabric does the sight invade,
> And stretches o'er the waves a pompous shade.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] Pope may mean that nothing affords happiness which infringes virtue, and this would contradict the conclusion of the second epistle, where he dwells upon the continuous happiness we derive from follies and vanities. Or he may mean that virtue is by itself complete happiness, whatever else may be our circumstances, which would contradict ver. 119, where he says that the "virtuous son is ill at ease" when he inherits a "dire disease" from his profligate father.

[5] The allusion here seems to be to the pole, or central point, of a spherical body, which, during the rotatory motion of every other part, continues immoveable and at rest.—WAKEFIELD.

The "human bliss" does not "stand still," unless we believe that the virtuous man suffers nothing when his virtue subjects him to scorn, persecution, and tortures.

[6] "It" in this couplet and the next stands for virtuous "merit."

[7] Merchant of Venice, Act iv. Sc. 1:

> it is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

Digitized by Google

The joy unequalled, if its end it gain,[1]
And if it lose, attended with no pain:[2]
Without satiety, though e'er so blessed,
And but more relished as the more distressed:
The broadest mirth[3] unfeeling folly wears,
Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears:[4]
Good, from each object, from each place acquired,
For ever exercised, yet never tired;[5]
Never elated, while one man's oppressed;
Never dejected, while another's blessed;
And where no wants, no wishes can remain,
Since but to wish more virtue is to gain.[6]

That the perfection of happiness.

See the sole bliss heav'n could on all bestow!
Which who but feels can taste, but thinks can know;

[1] Immortality must be the "end" which it will be "unequalled joy to gain," and yet "no pain to lose," since the annihilated will not be conscious of the loss. Lord Byron expressed the same idea in a letter, Dec. 8, 1821: "Indisputably, the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others,—for this simple reason, that, if true, they will have their reward hereafter, and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life." Pope and Byron leave out of their reckoning the sufferings to which christians are constantly exposed through their homage to christianity.

[2] After ver. 316 in the MS.:

Ev'n while it seems unequal to dispose,
And chequers all the good man's joys with woes,
'Tis but to teach him to support each state,
With patience this, with moderation that;
And raise his base on that one solid joy,
Which conscience gives, and nothing can destroy.—WARBURTON.

The sense in the first line is not completed. Virtue "seems unequal to dispose" something, but we are not told what.

[3] This is the Greek expression, πλατυς γελως, broad or wide laughter, derived, I presume, from the greater aperture of the mouth in loud laughter.—WAKEFIELD.

[4] MS.:

More pleasing, then, humanity's soft tears
Than all the mirth unfeeling folly wears.

There are numerous grades of character between "unfeeling folly" and christian excellence, and many gratifications of the earthly-minded are assuredly more pleasant for the time than the sharp and ennobling pangs of suffering virtue.

[5] MS.:

Which not by starts, and from without acquired,
Is all ways exercised, and never tired.

[6] Is it so impossible that a "wish" should "remain" when Pope has just said that virtue is "never elated while one oppressed man" exists? Or has virtue in tears, ver. 320, no wish for that happiness which Pope says, ver. 1, is "our being's end and aim?" Or is the "wish" for "more virtue" fulfilled by the act of wishing, without frequent failure, and perpetual conflict, and prolonged self-denial?

Digitized by Google

consists in a conformity to the order of Providence here, and a resignation to it here and hereafter.

Yet poor with fortune, and with learning blind,
The bad must miss; the good,[1] untaught, will find;
Slave to no sect,[2] who takes no private road,
But looks through nature up to nature's God;[3]
Pursues that chain which links th' immense design,
Joins heav'n and earth, and mortal and divine;
Sees, that no being any bliss can know,
But touches some above and some below;
Learns from this union of the rising whole,
The first, last purpose of the human soul;
And knows where faith, law, morals, all began,
All end, in love of God, and love of man.[4]
  For him alone hope leads from goal to goal,
And opens still, and opens on his soul;
Till lengthened on to faith, and unconfined,
It pours the bliss that fills up all the mind.[5]
He sees why nature plants in man alone
Hope of known bliss, and faith in bliss unknown:
(Nature, whose dictates to no other kind
Are giv'n in vain,[6] but what they seek they find;)[7]

[1] "The good" is singular, and stands for "the good man," as is required by the verbs "takes," "looks," "pursues," etc., up to the end of the paragraph.

[2] Creech's Horace, Epist. i. 1, ver. 23:

But if you ask me now what sect I own,
I swear a blind obedience unto none.—WAKEFIELD.

[3] Bolingbroke's Letters to Pope: "The modest enquirer follows nature, and nature's God."—WAKEFIELD.

[4] MS.:

Let us, my S[t. John], this plain truth confess,
Good nature makes, and keeps our happiness;
And faith and morals end as they began,
All in the love of God, and love of man.

In his second epistle Pope maintains that we are born with the germ of an unalterable ruling passion which grows with our growth, and swallows up every other passion. Among these ruling passions he specifies spleen, hate, fear, anger, etc., which are dispensed by fate, absorb the entire man, and of necessity exclude love. Here, on the contrary, we are told, ver. 327–340, that "the sole bliss heaven could on *all* bestow," is the virtue which "ends in love of God and love of man."

[5] He hopes, indeed, for another life, but he does not from hence infer the absolute necessity of it, in order to vindicate the justice and goodness of God.—WARTON.

[6] The "other kind" is the animal creation, which, says Pope, has not been given any abortive instinct. Nature, which furnishes the impulse, never fails to provide appropriate objects for its gratification.

[7] The meaning of this couplet

Digitized by Google

Wise is her present: she connects in this
His greatest virtue with his greatest bliss;[1]
At once his own bright prospect to be blessed,
And strongest motive to assist the rest.
  Self-love thus pushed to social, to divine,
Gives thee to make thy neighbour's blessing thine.
Is this too little for the boundless heart?
Extend it, let thy enemies have part:
Grasp the whole worlds of reason, life, and sense,
In one close system of benevolence:[2]
Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,
And height of bliss but height of charity.
  God loves from whole to parts: but human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;[3]
The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
His country next; and next all human race;[4]
Wide and more wide th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;

comes out clearer in the prose explanation which Pope has written on his MS.: "God implants a desire of immortality, which at least proves he would have us think of, and expect it, and he gives no appetite in vain to any creature. As God plainly gave this hope, or instinct, it is plain man should entertain it. Hence flows his greatest hope, and greatest incentive to virtue."

[1] "His greatest virtue" is benevolence; "his greatest bliss" the hope of a happy eternity. Nature connects the two, for the bliss depends on the virtue.

[2] Pope exalts the duty of "benevolence," which, ver. 371, causes "earth to smile with boundless bounty blessed." But bounty cannot benefit the recipients, if the poet is right in maintaining that happiness is independent of externals.

[3] Warton remarks that this simile, which is copied from Chaucer, was used by Pope in two other places,—The Temple of Fame, ver. 436, and the Dunciad, ii. ver. 407.

[4] Waller, Divine Love, Canto v.:

A love so unconfined
With arms extended would embrace mankind.
Self-love would cease, or be dilated, when
We should behold as many selfs as men.—
WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blessed,
And heav'n beholds its image in his breast.[1]
Come then, my friend![2] my genius! come along,
O master of the poet and the song!
And while the muse now stoops, or now ascends,
To man's low passions, or their glorious ends,[3]
Teach me, like thee in various nature wise,
To fall with dignity, with temper rise;[4]
Formed by thy converse, happily to steer
From grave to gay, from lively to severe:[5]
Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,
Intent to reason, or polite to please.[6]

[1] MS. :

To rise from individuals to the whole
Is the true progress of the godlike soul.
The first impression the soft passions make,
Like the small pebble in the limpid lake,
Begets a greater and a greater still,
The circle widening till the whole it fill;
Till God and man, and brute and reptile kind
All wake, all move, all agitate his mind;
Earth with his bounteous overflows is blessed; [breast.
Heav'n pleased beholds its image in his
Parent or friend first touch the virtuous mind,
His country next, and next all human kind.

[2] In the MS. thus :

And now transported o'er so vast a plain,
While the winged courser flies with all her rein,
While heav'n-ward now her mounting wing she feels,
Now scattered fools fly trembling from her heels,
Wilt thou, my St. John! keep her course in sight,
Confine her fury, and assist her flight?—
WARBURTON.

The exaggerated estimate which Pope had formed of the Essay on Man is apparent from this passage. With respect to the poetry, "the winged courser flew with all her rein;" with respect to the argument, "scattered fools flew trembling" from its crushing power.

[3] "Stoops to man's low passions or ascends to the glorious ends" for which those passions have been given.

[4] "Did he rise with temper," asks the writer of A Letter to Mr. Pope, 1735, "when he drove furiously out of the kingdom the Duke of Marlborough? or did he fall with dignity when he fled from justice, and joined the Pretender?" Lord Hervey asserts, and many circumstances confirm his testimony, that Bolingbroke "was elate and insolent in power, dejected and servile in disgrace."

[5] Boileau's Art of Poetry, translated by Soame and Dryden, Canto i. :

Happy, who in his verse can gently steer
From grave to light, from pleasant to severe.
—WAKEFIELD.

[6] MS. :

And while the muse transported, unconfined,
Soars to the sky, or stoops among mankind,
Teach her like thee, through various fortune wise,
With dignity to sink, with temper rise;
Formed by thy converse, steer an equal flight
From grave to gay, from profit to delight
Artful with grace, and natural to please,
Intent in business, elegant in ease.

Digitized by Google

Oh! while along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame;
Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?[1]
When statesmen, heroes, kings, in dust repose,
Whose sons shall blush their fathers were thy foes,[2]
Shall then this verse to future age pretend[3]
Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?
That, urged by thee, I turned the tuneful art
From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;[4]
For wit's false mirror held up nature's light;
Showed erring pride, whatever is, is right;
That reason, passion, answer one great aim;
That true self-love and social are the same;
That virtue only makes our bliss below;
And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know.[5]

[1] From Statius, Silv. Lib. i. Carm. iv. 120:

immensæ veluti connexa carinæ
Cymba minor, cum sævit hyems, pro parte, furentes
Parva receptat aquas, et eodem volvitur austro.—HURD.

Mr. Pope forgot while he wrote ver. 383—6, the censures he had so justly cast, ver. 237, upon that vain desire of an useless immortality.—CROUSAZ.

[2] An unfortunate prophecy. Posterity has more than confirmed the contempt in which Bolingbroke's character was held by his contemporaries.

[3] "Pretend" is used in the old and literal sense "to stretch out before any one." Its exact synonym in Pope's line is "proclaim."

[4] Pope professes to believe that all his poetry up to the Essay on Man was made up of "sounds" to the exclusion of "things," and was addressed as little "to the heart" as to the understanding. His change of subject, and his panegyrics on virtue, had at least not taught him that the manly simplicity of truth was to be preferred to insincere hyperboles.

[5] In the MS. thus:

That just to find a God is all we can,
And all the study of mankind is man.—WARBURTON.

The MS. has another version of the couplet in the text:

And all our knowledge, all our bliss below,
To love our neighbour, and ourselves to know.

Digitized by Google

THE

UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

DEO OPT. MAX

Digitized by Google

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

By the Author of the "Essay on Man."

London: Printed for R. Dodsley, at Tully's-Head, in Pall-Mall, 1738,
Price Sixpence.

This pamphlet, which came out in folio, and octavo, and probably in quarto, was the only separate edition of the Universal Prayer.

Digitized by Google

For closeness and comprehension of thought, and for brevity and energy of expression, few pieces of poetry in our language can be compared with this Prayer. I am surprised Johnson should not make any mention of it. When it was first published many orthodox persons were, I remember, offended at it, and called it the Deist's Prayer. It were to be wished the deists would make use of so good a one.—Warton.

How extraordinary it is that Warton should be ever accused as if he wished to decry Pope! No one has borne such willing and ample testimony to his excellence as a poet, when he truly deserves it. In this place Warton gives the poetry more praise than it appears entitled to, though this composition is beautiful, and the two last stanzas sublime; but I fear, if we were to examine the greater part by the Horatian rule, which Warton recommends, that is, altering the rhyme and measure,[1] we should not find the "disjecti membra poetæ."—Bowles.

Warburton says that "some passages in the Essay on Man having been unjustly suspected of a tendency towards fate and naturalism, the author composed this prayer as the sum of all, to show that his system was founded in free-will, and terminated in piety." The prayer was written shortly before Warburton stretched out his helping hand to Pope, and therefore before the poet had renounced the system and assistance of Bolingbroke, in reliance on a more serviceable defender. He did not yet venture, as Warburton pretends, to abjure "naturalism," but kept to it in every line, and even in the title of his poem. A "universal" could not be a christian prayer. He avowedly set aside the distinguishing characteristics of the gospel, and professed to exclude all language which could not be adopted by the votaries of "every age and clime," by "savage" as well as "saint," by the idolaters of "Jupiter" as well as by the worshippers of "Jehovah." No wonder that many persons in England should have called the Universal, the Deist's Prayer, or that when translated into French it should have gone by the title of *Prière du Déiste*.[2] Warton "wished the deists would make use of so good a one." There was nothing in their creed which could require them to use a worse.

[1] The rule of Horace and Warton for testing poetry was to divest it of metre by changing the order of the words. The language of Bowles would give the idea that the change was to be from one measure and set of rhymes to another.

[2] Voltaire, Œuvres, tom. xiv. p. 169.

Digitized by Google

On the question of "free-will," Pope taught discordant doctrines. In the Universal Prayer it is said that the "human will is left free," and in the Essay on Man "moral ill" is ascribed to its "wanderings."[1] But in other parts of the Essay we are told that Cæsar's fierce ambition is inspired by God, and that man is born with a single ruling passion which, do all he can, engulfs every sentiment of his soul. Neither this, nor any other discrepancy, is cleared up in the Universal Prayer. The contradictions are only multiplied. According to the Prayer "nature is bound fast in fate," and according to the Essay "nature deviates," which is asserted to account for the "physical ill" that God does "not send."[2] The Essay teaches us that the moral law of mankind is selfishness, and that we are to be virtuous solely because it promotes our individual happiness. The fourth stanza of the Prayer reverses the relation in which virtue stands to happiness, and bids us shun evil more than hell or pain, pursue good more than heaven or felicity. Pope's view of Providence in the Essay is that God will not interpose to protect his servants.[3] The Prayer contains a petition for "bread and peace," which is either a delusive form or a confession that the Almighty adapts events to the pious dispositions of particular men. Reason concurs with revelation in this conclusion. The necessary inference from the perfection of God's attributes is that his government takes in every circumstance, and as mind is superior to matter, physical laws cannot be framed without a special regard to the fervent prayers of faithful hearts.

The Universal Prayer failed to fulfil Pope's main design, and increased the confusion it was meant to remove. His defective material is cast in an unsuitable form, and, wanting to expound his opinions, he has introduced comments which are misplaced or offensive in a prayer. No worshipper of Jehovah would blasphemously address him as "Jehovah or Jove," and no one, except the persons who preach while they pray, would introduce such reflections as that "God is paid when man receives," and that "binding nature fast in fate he had left free the human will." The faulty conception is not redeemed by the exquisiteness of the poetry. The composition is tame and prosaic, and never rises above the level of a second-rate hymn.

[1] Epist. iv. ver. 112. [2] Epist. iv. ver. 111—113.
[3] Epist. iv. ver. 121.

Digitized by Google

THE

UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

DEO OPT. MAX.

FATHER of all! in ev'ry age,
In ev'ry clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord![1]

[1] Archbishop Whately, Bacon's Essays, p. 145, quotes this stanza, and says that it is strange that Pope, and those who use similar language, should have "failed to perceive that the pagan nations were in reality atheists. For by the word God we understand an Eternal Being, who made and who governs all things. And so far were the ancient pagans from believing that 'in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth,' that, on the contrary, the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and many other natural objects, were among the very gods they adored. Accordingly, the apostle Paul expressly calls the ancient pagans, atheists, Ephes. ii. 12, though he well knew that they worshipped certain supposed superior beings which they called gods. But he says in the Epistle to the Romans that 'they worshipped the creature more than, that is, instead of the Creator.' And at Lystra, when the people were going to do sacrifice to him and Barnabas, mistaking them for two of their gods, he told them to 'turn from those vanities to serve the living God, who made heaven and earth.'" The pagans were equally ignorant of the holiness of the Supreme Being; and Pope himself, describing the heathen divinities, Essay on Man, Epist. iii. 257, calls them

> Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust.

Such a divinity was Jupiter, and to worship an abominable phantom, conspicuous for "rage, revenge, and lust," was not to adore "Jehovah."

Digitized by Google

Thou Great First Cause, least understood!
Who all my sense confined[1]
To know but this, that thou art good,[2]
And that myself am blind;

Yet gave me in this dark estate,
To see the good from ill:
And binding nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will.[3]

What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do,
This teach me more than hell to shun,
That, more than heav'n pursue.

What blessings thy free bounty gives
Let me not cast away;
For God is paid when man receives:
T' enjoy is to obey.

[1] It ought to be "confinedst" or "didst confine," and afterwards "gavedst" or "didst give" in the second person.—WARTON.

[2] This may mean that the Deity was beneficent, or holy, or both, but whatever sense Pope attached to the word, he held with Bolingbroke that the attributes of the Divine Being were not the qualities which passed by the same name among us, and the present stanza is a re-assertion of the doctrine of the Essay on Man, Epist. ii. 1, that we must not "presume to scan God," or think to know more than the bare fact that he is "good."

[3] First edition:

Left conscience free and will.

Here followed, if it is genuine, a suppressed stanza, which Mrs. Thrale repeated to Dr. Johnson, and which she said a clergyman of their acquaintance had discovered:

Can sins of moments claim the rod
Of everlasting fires?
And that offend great nature's God
Which nature's self inspires

Mrs. Thrale called the stanza "licentious," Johnson observed that it was borrowed from the Pastor Fido of Guarini, and Boswell pointed our that a "rod of fires" was an incongruous metaphor. "I warrant you, however," said Johnson, "Pope wrote this stanza, and some friend struck it out." The folly of the lines is transparent. The "sins" with which "nature's self inspires" man, "conscience warns him not to do," ver. 14, and Pope assumes that God will never be "offended" if we disregard conscience, and yield to temptation.

[4] This stanza was evidently directed against the ascetic acts which were rated high among virtues by the papists.

Digitized by Google

Yet not to earth's contracted span
The goodness let me bound,
Or think Thee Lord alone of man,
When thousand worlds are round:

Let not this weak, unknowing hand
Presume thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land[1]
On each I judge thy foe.[2]

If I am right, thy grace impart
Still in the right to stay:
If I am wrong, oh teach my heart
To find that better way.

Save me alike from foolish pride,
Or impious discontent,
At aught thy wisdom has denied,
Or aught thy goodness lent.

Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.[3]

There is something elevated in the idea and expression,

Or think Thee Lord alone of man,
When thousand worlds are round;

but the conclusion is a contrast of littleness,

And deal damnation round the land.—BOWLES.

[2] Unquestionably no man of right judgment will pronounce the holder of any opinion to be beyond the limits of divine mercy; but he may justly pronounce the opinion itself to be ruinous in the highest degree. Nothing can be more false than the spurious liberality which presumes all opinions to be equally innocent, or affects to conceive that man is answerable only for the sincerity of his convictions. He is accountable for his opportunities, his understanding, and his knowledge, and if he espouses error through negligence, prejudice, or presumption, he involves himself in the full criminality of his error.—CROLY.

[3] I have often wondered that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines. Alas for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received.—COWPER.

Digitized by Google

Mean though I am, not wholly so,
  Since quickened by thy breath:
Oh lead me wheresoe'er I go,
  Through this day's life or death.

This day be bread and peace my lot:
  All else beneath the sun,
Thou know'st if best bestowed or not,
  And let thy will be done.

To Thee, whose temple is all space,
  Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,[1]
One chorus let all being raise;
  All nature's incense rise!

[1] Lucan, ix. 578:

Estne Dei sedes, nisi terra, et pontus, et aer,
Et cœlum, et virtus?—WAKEFIELD.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

THE COMMENTARY AND NOTES OF WILLIAM WARBURTON, D.D.

ON THE

ESSAY ON MAN.[1]

COMMENTARY ON EPISTLE I.

THE opening of this Poem, in fifteen lines, is taken up in giving an account of the subject; which, agreeably to the title, is an Essay on Man, or a philosophical inquiry into his nature and end, his passions and pursuits. The exordium relates to the whole work, of which the Essay on Man was only the first book. The sixth, seventh, and eighth lines allude to the subjects of this Essay, viz. the general order and design of Providence; the constitution of the human mind; the origin, use, and end of the passions and affections, both selfish and social; and the wrong pursuits of happiness in power, pleasure, &c. The tenth, eleventh, twelfth, &c. have relation to the subjects of the books intended to follow, viz. the characters and capacities of men, and the limits of science, which once transgressed, ignorance begins, and errors without end succeed. The thirteenth and fourteenth, to the knowledge of mankind, and the various manners of the age.

The poet tells us next, line 16, with what design he wrote, viz.

To vindicate the ways of God to man.

The men he writes against, he frequently informs us, are such as weigh their opinions against Providence, ver. 114, such as cry, if man's unhappy, God's

[1] Erudition and acuteness are not the only requisites of a good commentator. That conformity of sentiment which enables him fully to enter into the intention of his author, and that fairness of disposition which places him above every wish of disguising or misrepresenting it, are qualifications not less essential. In these points it is no breach of candour to affirm, since the public voice has awarded the sentence, that Dr. Warburton has, in various of his critical labours, shown himself extremely defective, and perhaps in none more than in those he has expended upon this performance, his manifest purposes in which, have been to give it a systematic perfection that it does not possess, to conceal as much as possible the suspicious source whence the author derived his leading ideas, and to reduce the whole to the standard of moral orthodoxy. So much is the sense of the poet strained and warped by these processes of his commentator, that it is scarcely possible in many places to enter into his real meaning, without laying aside the commentary, and letting the text speak for itself.—AIKIN.

Digitized by Google

unjust, ver. 118, or such as fall into the notion, that vice and virtue there is none at all, Epistle ii. ver. 212. This occasions the poet to divide his vindication of the ways of God into two parts; in the first of which he gives direct answers to those objections which libertine men, on a view of the disorders arising from the perversity of the human will, have intended against Providence; and in the second, he obviates all those objections, by a true delineation of human nature, or a general, but exact, map of man. The first Epistle is employed in the management of the first part of this dispute; and the three following, in the discussion of the second. So that this whole book constitutes a complete Essay on Man, written for the best purpose, to vindicate the ways of God.

Ver. 17. *Say first, of God above, or man below, &c.*] The poet having declared his subject; his end of writing; and the quality of his adversaries, proceeds, from ver. 16 to 28, to instruct us, from whence he intends to draw his arguments; namely, from the visible things of God in this system, to demonstrate the invisible things of God, his eternal power and godhead. And why? Because we can reason only from what we know; and as we know no more of man than what we see of his station here, so we know no more of God than what we see of his dispensations in this station; being able to trace him no further than to the limits of our own system. This naturally leads the poet to exprobrate the miserable folly and impiety of pretending to pry into, and call in question, the profound dispensations of Providence: which reproof contains, from ver. 22 to 43, a sublime description of the omniscience of God, and the miserable blindness and presumption of man.

Ver. 43. *Of systems possible, &c.*] So far the poet's modest and sober introduction: in which he truly observes, that no wisdom less than omniscient

> Can tell why heav'n has made us as we are.

Yet though we be unable to discover the particular reasons for this mode of our existence, we may be assured in general that it is right. For now, entering upon his argument, he lays down this evident proposition as the foundation of his thesis, which he reasonably supposes will be allowed him, That, of all possible systems, infinite wisdom hath formed the best, ver. 43, 44. From whence he draws two consequences:

1. The first, from ver. 44 to 51, is, that as the best system cannot but be such a one as hath no unconnected void; such a one in which there is a perfect coherence and gradual subordination in all its parts; there must needs be, in some part or other of the scale of reasoning life, such a creature as man, which reduces the dispute to this absurd question, Whether God has placed him wrong?

Ver. 51. *Respecting man, &c.*] It being shown that man, the subject of this inquiry, has a necessary place in such a system as this is confessed to be; and it being evident, that the abuse of free-will, from whence proceeds all moral evil, is the certain effect of such a creature's existence; the next question will be, how these evils can be accounted for, consistently with the idea we have of God's moral attributes? Therefore,

2. The second consequence he draws from his principle, That of all possible systems, infinite wisdom has formed the best, is, that whatever is wrong in our private system, is right as relative to the whole:

> Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
> May, must be right, as relative to all.

Digitized by Google

That it may, he proves, from ver. 52 to 61, by showing in what consists the difference between the systematic works of God, and those of man; viz. that, in the latter, a thousand movements scarce gain one purpose; in the former, one movement gains many purposes. So that

> Man, who here seems principal alone,
> Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown.

And acting thus, the appearance of wrong in the partial system may be right in the universal; for

> 'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

That it must, the whole body of this epistle is employed to illustrate and enforce. Thus partial evil is universal good, and thus Providence is fairly acquitted.

Ver. 61. *When the proud steed, &c.*] From all this the poet draws a general conclusion, from ver. 60 to 91, that, as what has been said is sufficient to vindicate the ways of Providence, man should rest submissive and content, and own everything to be disposed for the best; that to think of discovering the manner how God conducts this wonderful scheme to its completion, is as absurd as to imagine that the horse and ox shall ever be able to comprehend why they undergo such different treatment in the hand of man: nay, that such knowledge, if communicated, would be even pernicious, and make us neglect or desert our duty here. This he illustrates by the case of the lamb, which is happy in not knowing the fate that attends it from the butcher; and from thence takes occasion to observe, that God is the equal master of all his creatures, and provides for the proper happiness of each and every of them.

Ver. 91. *Hope humbly then; &c.*] But now an objector is supposed to put in, and say, "You tell us, indeed, that all things shall terminate in good; but we see ourselves surrounded with present evil; yet you forbid us all inquiry into the manner how we are to be extricated from it, and, in a word, leave us in a very disconsolate condition." Not so, replies the poet; you may reasonably, if you please, receive much comfort from the hope of a happy futurity; a hope implanted in the human breast by God himself for this very purpose, as an earnest of that bliss, which, always flying from us here, is reserved for the good man hereafter. The reason why the poet chooses to insist on this proof of a future state, in preference to others, is in order to give his system (which is founded in a sublime and improved Platonism) the greater grace of uniformity. For hope was Plato's peculiar argument for a future state; and the words here employed, The soul uneasy, &c. his peculiar expression. The poet in this place, therefore, says in express terms, that God gave us hope to supply that future bliss, which he at present keeps hid from us. In his second Epistle, ver. 274, he goes still further, and says, this hope quits us not even at death, when every thing mortal drops from us:

> Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.

And in the fourth Epistle he shows how the same hope is a proof of a future state, from the consideration of God's giving his creatures no appetite in vain, or what he did not intend should be satisfied:

> He sees, why nature plants in man alone
> Hope of known bliss, and faith in bliss unknown:
> Nature, whose dictates to no other kind
> Are giv'n in vain, but what they seek they find.

Digitized by Google

It is only for the good man, he tells us, that hope leads from goal to goal, &c. It would then be strange indeed, if it should prove an illusion.

Ver. 99. *Lo! the poor Indian, &c.*] The poet, as we said, having bid man comfort himself with expectation of future happiness; having shown him that this hope is an earnest of it, and put in one very necessary caution,

Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;

provoked at those miscreants whom he afterwards, Ep. iii. ver. 263, describes as building hell on spite, and heaven on pride, he upbraids them, from ver. 98 to 112, with the example of the poor Indian, to whom also nature hath given this common hope of mankind: but though his untutored mind had betrayed him into many childish fancies concerning the nature of that future state, yet he is so far from excluding any part of his own species (a vice which could proceed only from the pride of false science), that he humanely, though simply, admits even his faithful dog to bear him company.

Ver. 113. *Go, wiser thou! &c.*] He proceeds with these accusers of Providence, from ver. 112 to 122, and shows them, that complaints against the established order of things begin in the highest absurdity, from misapplied reason and power; and end in the highest impiety, in an attempt to degrade the God of heaven, and to assume his place:

Alone made perfect here, immortal there:

That is, be made God, who only is perfect, and hath immortality: to which sense the lines immediately following confine us:

Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge his justice, be the God of God.

Ver. 123. *In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies; &c.*] From these men, the poet now turns to his friend; and, from ver. 122 to 130, remarks, that the ground of all this extravagance is pride; which, more or less, infects the whole reasoning tribe; shows the ill effects of it, in the case of the fallen angels; and observes, that even wishing to invert the laws of order, is a lower species of their crime. He then brings an instance of one of the effects of pride, which is the folly of thinking everything made solely for the use of man, without the least regard to any other of the creatures of God.

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine, &c.

The ridicule of imagining the greater portions of the material system to be solely for the use of man, true philosophy has sufficiently exposed: and common sense, as the poet observes, instructs us to conclude, that our fellow-creatures, placed by Providence as the joint inhabitants of this globe, are designed to be joint sharers with us of its blessings:

Has God, thou fool! worked solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn.

Ver. 141. *But errs not nature from this gracious end,*] The author comes next to the confirmation of his thesis, That partial moral evil is universal good; but introduceth it with an allowed instance in the natural world, to abate our wonder at the phenomenon of moral evil; which he forms into an argument on a concession of his adversaries. If we ask you, says he, from ver. 140 to 150, whether nature doth not err from the gracious purpose of its

Digitized by Google

Creator, when plagues, earthquakes, and tempests unpeople whole regions at a time; you readily answer, No: for that God acts by general, and not by particular laws; and that the course of matter and motion must be necessarily subject to some irregularities, because nothing is created perfect. I then ask, why you should expect this perfection in man? If you own that the great end of God (notwithstanding all this deviation) be general happiness, then it is nature and not God that deviates; do you expect greater constancy in man?

Then nature deviates; and can man do less?

That is, if nature, or the inanimate system (on which God hath imposed his laws, which it obeys, as a machine obeys the hand of the workman), may in course of time deviate from its first direction, as the best philosophy shows it may; where is the wonder that man, who was created a free agent, and hath it in his power every moment to transgress the eternal rule of right, should sometimes go out of order?

Ver. 151. *As much that end, &c.*] Having thus shown how moral evil came into the world, namely, by man's abuse of his own free-will, our poet comes to the point, the confirmation of his thesis, by showing how moral evil promotes good; and employs the same concessions of his adversaries, concerning natural evil, to illustrate it.

1. He shows it tends to the good of the whole, or universe, from ver. 151 to 164, and this by analogy. You own, says he, that storms and tempests, clouds, rain, heat, and variety of seasons, are necessary (notwithstanding the accidental evil they bring with them) to the health and plenty of this globe; why then should you suppose there is not the same use, with regard to the universe, in a Borgia or a Catiline? But you say you can see the one, and not the other. You say right: one terminates in this system, the other refers to the whole: which whole can be comprehended by none but the great Author himself. For, says the poet in another place,

Of this frame, the bearings and the ties,
The strong connexions, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd through? or can a part contain the whole?

Own therefore, says he, that

From pride, from pride, our very reas'ning springs;
Account for moral, as for nat'ral things:
Why charge we heav'n in those, in these acquit?
In both, to reason right, is to submit.

Ver. 165. *Better for us, &c.*] But, secondly, to strengthen the foregoing analogical argument, and to make the wisdom and goodness of God still more apparent, he observes, from ver. 165 to 172, that moral evil is not only productive of good to the whole, but is even productive of good in our own system. It might, says he, perhaps appear better to us, that there were nothing in this world but peace and virtue;

That never air or ocean felt the wind;
That never passion discomposed the mind.

But then consider, that as our material system is supported by the strife of its elementary particles, so is our intellectual system, by the conflict of our passions, which are the elements of human action. In a word, as without the benefit of tempestuous winds, both air and ocean would stagnate, corrupt, and

Digitized by Google

spread universal contagion throughout all the ranks of animals that inhabit, or are supported by, them; so, without the benefit of the passions, such virtue as was merely the effect of the absence of those passions, would be a lifeless calm, a stoical apathy.

> Contracted all, retiring to the breast:
> But health of mind is exercise, not rest.

Therefore, instead of regarding the conflicts of the elements, and the passions of the mind, as disorders, you ought to consider them as part of the general order of Providence: and that they are so, appears from their always preserving the same unvaried course, throughout all ages, from the creation to the present time:

> The gen'ral order, since the whole began,
> Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.

We see, therefore, it would be doing great injustice to our author to suspect that he intended by this to give any encouragement to vice. His system, as all his Ethic Epistles show, is this: That the passions, for the reasons given above, are necessary to the support of virtue: that, indeed, the passions in excess produce vice, which is, in its own nature, the greatest of all evils, and comes into the world from the abuse of man's free-will; but that God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, deviously turns the natural bias of its malignity to the advancement of human happiness, and makes it productive of general good:

> Th' eternal art educes good from all.

This, set against what we have observed of the poet's doctrine of a future state, will furnish us with an instance of his steering (as he well expresses it in his preface) "between doctrines seemingly opposite: if his Essay has any merit, he thinks it is in this." And doubtless it is uncommon merit to reject the visions and absurdities of every system, and take in only what is rational and real. The Characteristics and the Fable of the Bees are two seemingly inconsistent systems; the folly of the first is in giving a scheme of virtue without religion; and the knavery of the latter, in giving a scheme of religion without virtue. These our poet leaves to any that will take them up; but agrees, however, so far with the first, that "virtue would be worth having, though itself was its only reward;" and so far with the latter, that "God makes evil, against its nature, productive of good."

Ver. 173. *What would this man? &c.*] Having thus justified Providence in its permission of partial moral evil, our author employs the remaining part of his Epistle in vindicating it from the imputation of certain supposed natural evils. For now he shows, from ver. 172 to 207, that though the complaint of his adversaries against Providence be on pretence of real moral evils; yet, at bottom, it all proceeds from their impatience under imaginary natural ones, the issue of a depraved appetite for visionary advantages, which if man had, they would be either useless or pernicious to him, as repugnant to his state, or unsuitable to his condition. Though God, says he, hath so bountifully bestowed on man faculties little less than angelic, yet he ungratefully grasps at higher; and then, extravagant in another extreme, with a passion as ridiculous as that is impious, envies, as what would be advantages to himself, even the peculiar accommodations of brutes. But here his own false principles expose the folly of his falser appetites. He supposes them all made for his use: now what use could he have of them, when he had robbed

Digitized by Google

them of all their qualities? Qualities distributed with the highest wisdom, as they are divided at present; but which, if bestowed according to the froward humour of these childish complainers, would be everywhere found to be either wanting or superfluous. But even though endowed with these brutal qualities, man would not only be no gainer, but a considerable loser; as the poet shows in explaining the consequences which would follow from his having his sensations in that exquisite degree in which this or the other animal is observed to possess them.

Ver. 207. *Far as creation's ample range extends,*] He tells us next, from ver. 206 to 233, that the complying with such extravagant desires would not only be useless and pernicious to man, but would be breaking into the order, and deforming the beauty of God's creation, in which this animal is subject to that, and every one to man, who, by his reason, enjoys the sum of all their powers.

Ver. 233. *See, through this air, &c.*] And further, from ver. 232 to 267, that this breaking the order of things, which, as a link or chain, connects all beings, from the highest to the lowest, would unavoidably be attended with the destruction of the universe; for that the several parts of it must at least compose as entire and harmonious a whole as the parts of a human body, can be doubted of by no one. Yet we see what confusion it would make upon our frame, if the members were set upon invading each other's office:

What if the foot, &c.

Who will not acknowledge, therefore, that a connexion in the disposition of things, so harmonious as here described, is transcendently beautiful? But the fatalists suppose such an one. What then? Is the First Free Agent, the great Cause of all things, debarred a contrivance infinitely exquisite, because some men, to set up their idol, fate, absurdly represent it as presiding over such a system?

Ver. 267. *All are but parts of one stupendous whole,*] Our author having thus given a representation of God's work, as one entire whole, where all the parts have a necessary dependence on, and relation to each other, and where each particular part works and concurs to the perfection of the whole, as such a system transcends vulgar ideas, to reconcile it to common conceptions he shows, from ver. 266 to 281, that God is equally and intimately present to every sort of substance, to every particle of matter, and in every instant of being; which eases the labouring imagination, and makes us expect no less from such a presence, than such a dispensation.

Ver. 281. *Cease then, nor order imperfection name:*] And now the poet, as he had promised, having vindicated the ways of God to man, concludes, from ver. 280 to the end, that, from what had been said, it appears, that the very things we blame contribute to our happiness, either as unrelated particulars, or at least as parts of the universal system; that our state of ignorance was allotted to us out of compassion; that yet we have as much knowledge as is sufficient to show us, that we are, and always shall be, as blessed as we can bear; for that nature is neither a Stratonic chain of blind causes and effects,

(All nature is but art, unknown to thee,)

nor yet the fortuitous result of Epicurean atoms,

(All chance, direction, which thou canst not see);

as those two speeches of atheism supposed it; but the wonderful art and con-

Digitized by Google

trivance, unknown indeed to man, of an all-powerful, all-wise, all-good, and free Being. And therefore we may be assured, that the arguments brought above, to prove partial moral evil productive of universal good, are conclusive; from whence one certain truth results, in spite of all the pride and cavils of vain reason, That whatever is, is right.

That the reader may see in one view the exactness of the method, as well as force of the argument, I shall here draw up a short synopsis of this Epistle. The poet begins by telling us, his subject is an Essay on Man: that his end of writing is to vindicate Providence: that he intends to derive his arguments from the visible things of God seen in his system: lays down this proposition, that of all possible systems, infinite wisdom has formed the best: draws from thence two consequences; 1. That there must needs be somewhere such a creature as man; 2. That the moral evil, which he is the author of, is productive of the good of the whole. This is his general thesis; from whence he forms this conclusion, that man should rest submissive and content, and make the hopes of futurity his comfort; but not suffer this to be the occasion of pride, which is the cause of all his impious complaints. He proceeds to confirm his thesis. Previously endeavours to abate our wonder at the phenomenon of moral evil; shows, first, its use to the perfection of the universe, by analogy, from the use of physical evil in this particular system. Secondly, its use in this system, where it is turned, providentially, from its natural bias, to promote virtue. Then goes on to vindicate Providence from the imputation of certain supposed natural evils, as he had before justified it for the permission of real moral evil, in showing that, though the atheist's complaint against Providence be on pretence of real moral evil, yet the true cause is his impatience under imaginary natural evil; the issue of a depraved appetite for fantastical advantages, which, if obtained, would be useless or hurtful to man, and deforming of, and destructive to, the universe, as breaking into that order by which it is supported. He describes that order, harmony, and close connexion of the parts; and by showing the intimate presence of God to his whole creation, gives a reason for an universe so amazingly beautiful and perfect. From all this he deduces his general conclusion, That nature being neither a blind chain of causes and effects, nor yet the fortuitous result of wandering atoms, but the wonderful art and direction of an all-wise, all-good, and free Being, Whatever is, is right, with regard to the disposition of God, and its ultimate tendency; which, once granted, all complaints against Providence are at an end.

COMMENTARY ON EPISTLE II.

Ver. 2. *The proper study, &c.*] The poet having shown, in the first Epistle, that the ways of God are too high for our comprehension, rightly draws this conclusion, and methodically makes it the subject of his introduction to the second, which treats of the nature of man. But here presently the accusers of Providence would be apt to object, and say, "Admit that we ran into an excess, when we pretended to censure or penetrate the designs of Providence, a matter, perhaps, too high for us, yet have not you gone as far into the

Digitized by Google

opposite extreme, while you only send us to the knowledge of ourselves? You must mock us when you talk of this as a study; for who can doubt but we are intimately acquainted with our own nature? The proper conclusion, therefore, from your proof of our inability to comprehend the ways of God, is, that we should turn ourselves to the study of the frame of general nature." Thus, I say, would they be apt to object; for, of all men, those who call themselves freethinkers are most given up to pride; especially to that kind which consists in a boasted knowledge of man, the effects of which pride are so well exposed in the first Epistle. The poet, therefore, to convince them that this study is less easy than they imagine, replies, from ver. 2 to 19, to the first part of the objection, by describing the dark and feeble state of the human understanding, with regard to the knowledge of ourselves. And further to strengthen this argument, he shows, in answer to the second part of the objection, from ver. 18 to 31, that the highest advances in natural knowledge may be easily acquired, and yet we, all the while, continue very ignorant of ourselves. For that neither the clearest science, which results from the Newtonian philosophy, nor the most sublime, which is taught by the Platonic, will at all assist us in this self-study; nay, what is more, that religion itself, when grown fanatical and enthusiastic, will be equally useless, though pure and sober religion will best instruct us in man's nature; that knowledge being necessary to religion, whose subject is man, considered in all his relations, and consequently, whose object is God.

Ver. 31. *Superior beings, &c.*] To give this second argument its full force, he illustrates it, from ver. 30 to 43, by the noblest example that ever was in science, the incomparable Newton, who, although he penetrated so far beyond others into the works of God, yet could go no further in the knowledge of his own nature than the generality of his fellows. Of which the poet assigns this very just and adequate reason,—in all other sciences the understanding is unchecked and uncontrolled by any opposite principle; but in the science of man, the passions overturn as fast as reason can build up.

Ver. 43. *Trace science then, &c.*] The conclusion, therefore, from the whole is, from ver. 42 to 53, that as on the one hand, we should persist in the study of nature, so, on the other, in order to arrive at science, we should proceed in the simplicity of truth; and then the produce, though small, will yet be real.

Ver. 53. *Two principles, &c.*] The poet having shown the difficulty which attends the study of man, proceeds to remove it, by laying before us the elements or true principles of this science, in an account of the origin, use, and end of the passions; which, in my opinion, contains the truest, clearest, shortest, and consequently the best system of ethics that is anywhere to be met with. He begins, from ver. 52 to 59, with pointing out the two grand principles in human nature, self-love and reason. Describes their general nature: the first sets man upon acting, the other regulates his action. However, these principles are natural, not moral; and, therefore, in themselves, neither good nor evil, but so only as they are directed. This observation is made with great judgment, in opposition to the desperate folly of those fanatics, who, as the ascetic, vainly pretend to eradicate self-love; or, as the mystic, are more successful in stifling reason; and both, on the absurd fancy of their being moral, not natural, principles.

Ver. 59. *Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;*] The poet proceeds, from ver. 58 to 67, more minutely to mark out the distinct offices of these two principles, which offices he had before assigned only in general; and here he

Digitized by Google

shows their necessity; for without self-love, as the spring, man would be unactive; and without reason as the balance, active to no purpose.

Ver. 67. *Most strength the moving principle requires:*] Having thus explained the ends and offices of each principle, he goes on, from ver. 66 to 79, to speak of their qualities; and shows how they are fitted to discharge those functions, and answer their respective intentions. The business of self-love being to excite to action, it is quick and impetuous; and moving instinctively, has, like attraction, its force prodigiously increased as the object approaches, and proportionably lessened as it recedes. On the contrary, reason, like the Author of attraction, is always calm and sedate, and equally preserves itself whether the object be near or far off. Hence the moving principle is made more strong, though the restraining be more quick-sighted. The consequence he draws from this is, that if we would not be carried away to our destruction, we must always keep reason upon guard.

Ver. 79. *Attention, &c.*] But it would be objected, that if this account be true, human life would be most miserable; and even in the wisest, a perpetual conflict between reason and the passions. To this, therefore, the poet replies, from ver. 78 to 81, first, that Providence has so graciously contrived, that even in the voluntary exercise of reason, as in the mechanic motion of a limb, habit makes what was at first done with pain, easy and natural. And secondly, that the experience gained by the long exercise of reason, goes a great way towards eluding the force of self-love. Now the attending to reason, as here recommended, will gain us this habit and experience. Hence it appears, that our station, in which reason is to be kept constantly upon guard, is not so uneasy a one as may be at first imagined.

Ver. 81. *Let subtle schoolmen, &c.*] From this description of self-love and reason, it follows, as the poet observes, from ver. 80 to 93, that both conspire to one end, namely, human happiness, though they be not equally expert in the choice of the means; the difference being this, that the first hastily seizes every thing which has the appearance of good; the other weighs and examines whether it be indeed what it appears. This shows, as he next observes, the folly of the schoolmen, who consider them as two opposite principles, the one good and the other evil. The observation is seasonable and judicious; for this dangerous school-opinion gives great support to the Manichean or Zoroastrian error, the confutation of which was one of the author's chief ends in writing. For if there be two principles in man, a good and evil, it is natural to think him the joint product of the two Manichean Deities (the first of which contributed to his reason, the other to his passions), rather than the creature of one Individual Cause. This was Plutarch's opinion, and as we may see in him, of some of the more ancient theistical philosophers. It was of importance, therefore, to reprobate and subvert a notion that served to the support of so dangerous an error; and this the poet hath done with more force and clearness than is often to be found in whole volumes written against that heretical opinion.

Ver. 93. *Modes of self-love, &c.*] Having given this account of the nature of self-love in general, he comes now to anatomize it, in a discourse on the passions, which he aptly names the modes of self-love. The object of all these, he shows, from ver. 92 to 101, is good; and when under the guidance of reason, real good, either of ourselves or of another; for some goods, not being capable of division, or communication, and reason at the same time directing us to provide for ourselves, we therefore, in pursuit of those objects, sometimes aim at our own good, sometimes at the good of others. When

Digitized by Google

fairly aiming at our own, the quality is called prudence; when at another's, virtue. Hence as he shows, from ver. 100 to 105, appears the folly of the stoics, who would eradicate the passions, things so necessary both to the good of the individual and of the kind. Which preposterous method of promoting virtue he therefore very reasonably reproves.

Ver. 105. *The rising tempest puts in act the soul,*] But as it was from observation of the evils occasioned by the passions, that the stoics thus extravagantly projected their extirpation, the poet recurs, from ver. 104 to 111, to his grand principle, so often before, and to so good purpose, insisted on, that partial ill is universal good; and shows, that though the tempest of the passions, like that of the air, may tear and ravage some few parts of nature in its passage, yet the salutary agitation produced by it preserves the whole in life and vigour. This is his first argument against the stoics, which he illustrates by a very beautiful similitude, on a hint taken from Scripture:

> Nor God alone in the still calm we find;
> He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind.

Ver. 111. *Passions, like elements, &c.*] His second argument against the stoics, from ver. 110 to 133, is, that passions go to the composition of a moral character, just as elementary particles go to the composition of an organized body. Therefore, for man to project the destruction of what composes his very being is the height of extravagance. It is true, he tells us, that these passions, which, in their natural state, like elements, are in perpetual jar, must be tempered, softened, and united, in order to perfect the work of the great plastic Artist; who, in this office, employs human reason; whose business it is to follow the road of nature, and to observe the dictates of the Deity; follow her and God. The use and importance of this precept is evident: for in doing the first, she will discover the absurdity of attempting to eradicate the passions; in doing the second, she will learn how to make them subservient to the interests of virtue.

Ver. 123. *Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes;*] His third argument against the stoics, from ver. 122 to 127, is, that the passions are a continual spur to the pursuit of happiness; which, without these powerful inciters, we should neglect, and sink into a senseless indolence. Now happiness is the end of our creation; and this excitement, the means to that end; therefore, these movers, the passions, are the instruments of God, which he hath put into the hands of reason to work withal.

Ver. 127. *All spread their charms, &c.*] The poet now proceeds in his subject; and this last observation leads him naturally to the discussion of his next principle. He shows then, that though all the passions have their turn in swaying the determinations of the mind, yet every man hath one master passion, that at length stifles or absorbs all the rest. The fact he illustrates at large in his Epistle to Lord Cobham. Here, from ver. 126 to 149, he giveth us the cause of it. Those pleasures or goods, which are the objects of the passions, affect the mind by striking on the senses; but as, through the formation of the organs of our frame, every man hath some one sense stronger and more acute than others, the object which strikes the stronger or acuter sense, whatever it be, will be the object most desired; and consequently, the pursuit of that will be the ruling passion: That the difference of force in this ruling passion shall at first, perhaps, be very small, or even imperceptible; but nature, habit, imagination, wit, nay, even reason itself, shall assist its

Digitized by Google

growth, till it hath at length drawn and converted every other into itself. All which is delivered in a strain of poetry so wonderfully sublime, as suspends, for a while, the ruling passion in every reader, and engrosses his whole admiration. This naturally leads the poet to lament the weakness and insufficiency of human reason, from ver. 148 to 161, and the purpose he had in so doing, was plainly to intimate the necessity of a more perfect dispensation to mankind.

Ver. 161. *Yes, nature's road, &c.*] Now as it appears from the account here given of the ruling passion and its cause, which results from the structure of the organs, that it is the road of nature, the poet shows, from ver. 160 to 167, that this road is to be followed. So that the office of reason is not to direct us what passion to exercise, but to assist us in rectifying, and keeping within due bounds, that which nature hath so strongly impressed; because

A mightier pow'r the strong direction sends,
And sev'ral men impels to several ends.

Ver. 167. *Like varying winds, &c.*] The poet, having proved that the ruling passion (since nature hath given it us) is not to be overthrown, but rectified; the next inquiry will be, of what use the ruling passion is; for an use it must have, if reason be to treat it thus mildly. This use he shows us, from ver. 166 to 197, is twofold, natural and moral.

1. Its natural use is to conduct men steadily to one certain end, who would otherwise be eternally fluctuating between the equal violence of various and discordant passions, driving them up and down at random; and, by that means, to enable them to promote the good of society, by making each a contributor to the common stock:

Let pow'r or knowledge, gold or glory, please, &c.

2. Its moral use is to ingraft our ruling virtue upon it; and by that means to enable us to promote our own good, by turning the exorbitancy of the ruling passion into its neighbouring virtue:

See anger, zeal and fortitude supply, &c.

The wisdom of the Divine Artist is, as the poet finely observes, very illustrious in this contrivance; for the mind and body having now one common interest, the efforts of virtue will have their force infinitely augmented:

'Tis thus the mercury, &c.

Ver. 197. *Reason the bias, &c.*] But lest it should be objected that this account favours the doctrine of necessity, and would insinuate that men are only acted upon, in the production of good out of evil; the poet teacheth, from ver. 196 to 203, that man is a free agent, and hath it in his power to turn the natural passions into virtues or into vices, properly so called:

Reason the bias turns to good from ill,
And Nero reigns a Titus, if he will.

Secondly, if it should be objected, that though he doth, indeed, tell us some actions are beneficial and some hurtful, yet he could not call those virtuous, nor these vicious, because, as he hath described things, the motive appears to be only the gratification of some passion, give me leave to answer for him, that this would be mistaking the argument, which, to ver. 249 of this epistle, con-

Digitized by Google

siders the passions only with regard to society, that is, with regard to their effects rather than their motives: That, however, it is his design to teach that actions are properly virtuous and vicious; and though it be difficult to distinguish genuine virtue from spurious, they having both the same appearance, and both the same public effects, yet that they may be disentangled. If it be asked, by what means? he replies, from ver. 202 to 205, by conscience;—the God within the mind;—and this is to the purpose; for it is a man's own concern, and no one's else, to know whether his virtue be pure and solid; for what is it to others, whether this virtue (while, as to them, the effect of it is the same) be real or imaginary?

Ver. 205. *Extremes in nature equal ends produce, &c.*] But still it will be said, Why all this difficulty to distinguish true virtue from false? The poet shows why, from ver. 204 to 211, that though indeed vice and virtue so invade each other's bounds, that sometimes we can scarce tell where one ends and the other begins, yet great purposes are served thereby, no less than the perfecting the constitution of the whole, as lights and shades, which run into one another insensibly in a well-wrought picture, make the harmony and spirit of the composition. But on this account to say there is neither vice nor virtue, the poet shows, from ver. 211 to 217, would be just as wise as to say, there is neither black nor white, because the shade of that, and the light of this, often run into one another, and are mutually lost:

> Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain;
> 'Tis to mistake them, costs the time and pain.

This is an error of speculation, which leads men so foolishly to conclude, that there is neither vice nor virtue.

Ver. 217. *Vice is a monster, &c.*] There is another error, an error of practice, which hath more general and hurtful effects; and is next considered, from ver. 216 to 221. It is this, that though, at the first aspect, vice be so horrible as to fright the beholder, yet, when by habit we are once grown familiar with her, we first suffer, and in time begin to lose the memory of her nature, which necessarily implies an equal ignorance in the nature of virtue. Hence men conclude that there is neither one nor the other.

Ver. 221. *But where th' extreme of vice, &c.*] But it is not only that extreme of vice which stands next to virtue, which betrays us into these mistakes. We are deceived too, as he shows us, from ver. 220 to 231, by our observations concerning the other extreme. For, from the extreme of vice being unsettled, men conclude that vice itself is only nominal, at least rather comparative than real.

Ver. 231. *Virtuous and vicious ev'ry man must be,*] There is yet a third cause of this error of no vice, no virtue, composed of the other two, *i.e.* partly speculative, and partly practical. And this also the poet considers, from ver. 230 to 239, showing it ariseth from the imperfection of the best characters, and the inequality of all; whence it happens that no man is extremely virtuous or vicious, nor extremely constant in the pursuit of either. Why it so happens, the poet informs us, who with admirable sagacity assigns the cause in this line:

> For, vice or virtue, self directs it still.

An adherence or regard to what is, in the sense of the world, a man's own interest, making an extreme, in either, almost impossible. Its effect in keeping a good man from the extreme of virtue needs no explanation; and, in an ill man, self-interest showing him the necessity of some kind of reputa-

Digitized by Google

tion, the procuring and preserving that will necessarily keep him from the extreme of vice.

Ver. 239. *That counter-works each folly and caprice;*] The mention of this principle, that self directs vice and virtue, and its consequence, which is, that

Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal,

leads the author to observe,

That heav'n's great view is one, and that the whole.

And this brings him naturally round again to his main subject, namely, God's producing good out of ill, which he prosecutes from ver. 238 to 249.

Ver. 249. *Heav'n forming each on other to depend,*] I. Hitherto the poet hath been employed in discoursing of the use of the passions, with regard to society at large; and in freeing his doctrine from objections. This is the first general division of the subject of this epistle.

II. He comes now to show, from ver. 248 to 261, the use of these passions, with regard to the more confined circle of our friends, relations, and acquaintance; and this is the second general division.

Ver. 261. *Whate'er the passion, &c.*] III. The poet having thus shown the use of the passions in society and in domestic life, comes, in the last place, from ver. 260 to the end, to show their use to the individual, even in their illusions; the imaginary happiness they present, helping to make the real miseries of life less insupportable: and this is his third general division:

Opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days, &c.
One prospect lost, another still we gain;
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain.

Which must needs vastly raise our idea of God's goodness; who hath not only provided more than a counterbalance of real happiness to human miseries, but hath even, in his infinite compassion, bestowed on those who were so foolish as not to have made this provision, an imaginary happiness, that they may not be quite overborne with the load of human miseries. This is the poet's great and noble thought, as strong and solid as it is new and ingenious. It teaches, that these illusions are the faults and follies of men, which they wilfully fall into, and thereby deprive themselves of much happiness, and expose themselves to equal misery; but that still, God, according to his universal way of working, graciously turns these faults and follies so far to the advantage of his miserable creatures, as to become, for a time, the solace and support of their distresses:

Though man's a fool, yet God is wise.

Digitized by Google

COMMENTARY ON EPISTLE III.

We are now come to the third Epistle of the Essay on Man. It having been shown, in explaining the origin, use, and end of the passions, in the second Epistle, that man hath social as well as selfish passions, that doctrine naturally introduceth the third, which treats of man as a social animal, and connects it with the second, which considered him as an individual. And as the conclusion from the subject of the first Epistle made the introduction to the second, so here again, the conclusion of the second

> Ev'n mean self-love becomes, by force divine
> The scale to measure others' wants by thine,

maketh the introduction to the third:

> Here then we rest: 'The Universal Cause
> Acts to one end, but acts by various laws.'

The reason of variety in those laws, which tend to one and the same end, the good of the whole generally, is, because the good of the individual is likewise to be provided for; both which together make up the good of the whole universally. And this is the cause, as the poet says elsewhere, that

> Each individual seeks a several goal.

But to prevent our resting there, God hath made each need the assistance of another; and so

> On mutual wants built mutual happiness.

It was necessary to explain the two first lines, the better to see the pertinency and force of what followeth, from ver. 2 to 7, where the poet warns such to take notice of this truth, whose circumstances placing them in an imaginary station of independence, and inducing a real habit of insensibility to mutual wants (from which wants general happiness results), make them but too apt to overlook the true system of things; viz. the men in full health and opulence. This caution was necessary with respect to society; but still more necessary with respect to religion. Therefore he especially recommends the memory of it as well to the clergy as laity when they preach or pray; because the preacher who doth not consider the First Cause under this view, as a Being consulting the good of the whole, must needs give a very unworthy idea of him; and the supplicant, who prayeth as one not related to a whole, or indifferent to the happiness of it, will not only pray in vain, but offend his Maker by neglecting the interest of his dispensation.

Ver. 7. *Look round our world; &c.*] He now introduceth his system of human sociability, ver. 7, 8, by showing it to be the dictate of the Creator; and that man, in this, did but follow the example of general nature, which is united in one close system of benevolence.

Ver. 9. *See plastic nature working to this end,*] This he proveth, first, from ver. 8 to 13, on the noble theory of attraction, from the economy of the material world, where there is a general conspiracy in all the particles of matter to work for one end, the use, beauty, and harmony of the whole mass.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 13. *See matter next, &c.*] The second argument, from ver. 12 to 27, is taken from the vegetable and animal world, whose parts serve mutually for the production, support, and sustentation of each other. But the observation, that God

> Connects each being, greatest with the least;
> Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast;
> All served, all serving,

awaking again the pride of his impious adversaries, who cannot bear that man should be thought to be serving as well as served, he takes this occasion again to humble them, from ver. 26 to 49, by the same kind of argument he had so successfully employed in the first Epistle, and which the comment on that epistle hath considered at large.

Ver. 49. *Grant that the pow'rful still the weak control;*] However, his adversaries, loth to give up the question, will reason upon the matter; and we are now to suppose them objecting against Providence in this manner. "We grant," they say, "that in the irrational, as in the inanimate creation, all is served, and all is serving: but with regard to man, the case is different: he standeth single: for his reason hath endowed him both with power and address sufficient to make all things serve him; and his self-love, of which you have so largely provided for him, will indispose him, in his turn, to serve any: therefore your theory is imperfect." Not so, replies the poet, from ver. 48 to 79. I grant that man, indeed, affects to be the wit and tyrant of the whole, and would fain shake off

> that chain of love
> Combining all below and all above:

But nature, even by the very gift of reason, checks this tyrant. For reason, endowing man with the ability of setting together the memory of the past with his conjectures about the future, and past misfortunes making him apprehensive of more to come, this disposeth him to pity and relieve others in a state of suffering. And the passion growing habitual, naturally extendeth its effects to all that have a sense of suffering. Now as brutes have neither man's reason, nor his inordinate self-love, to draw them from the system of beneficence, so they wanted not, and therefore have not, this human sympathy of another's misery, by which passion, we see, those qualities, in man, balance one another, and so retain him in that orderly connexion, in which Providence hath placed its whole creation. But this is not all: man's interest and amusement, his vanity and luxury, tie him still closer to the system of beneficence, by obliging him to provide for the support of other animals, and though it be, for the most part, only to devour them with the greater gust, yet this does not abate the proper happiness of the animals so preserved, to whom Providence hath not imparted the useless knowledge of their end. From all which it appears, that the theory is yet uniform and perfect.

Ver. 79. *Whether with reason, &c.*] But even to this as a caviller would still object, we must suppose he does so. "Admit," says he, "that nature hath endowed all animals, whether human or brutal, with such faculties as admirably fit them to promote the general good, yet, in its care for this, hath not nature neglected to provide for the private good of the individual? We have cause to think she hath; and we suppose, it was on exclusive consideration, that she kept back from brutes the gift of reason (so necessary a means of private happiness), because reason, as we find in the case of man,

Digitized by Google

where there is occasion for all the complicated contrivance you have described above, to make the effects of his passions counter-work the immediate powers of his reason, in order to keep him subservient to the general system; reason, we say, naturally tendeth to draw beings into a private independent system." This the poet answers, by showing, from ver. 78 to 109, that the happiness of animal and that of human life are widely different: the happiness of human life consisting in the improvement of the mind, can be procured by reason only; but the happiness of animal life consisting in the gratifications of sense, is best promoted by instinct. And, with regard to the regular and constant operation of each, in that, instinct hath plainly the advantage; for here God directs immediately; there only mediately through man.

Ver. 109. *God, in the nature of each being, &c.*] The author now cometh to the main subject of his epistle, the proof of man's sociability, from the two general societies composed by him; the natural, subject to paternal authority; and the civil, subject to that of a magistrate. This he hath the address to introduce, from what had preceded, in so easy and natural a manner, as showeth him to have the art of giving all the grace to the dryness and severity of method, as well as wit to the strength and depth of reason. The philosophic nature of his work requiring he should show by what reason those societies were introduced, this affords him an opportunity of sliding gracefully and easily from the preliminaries into the main subject; and so of giving his work that perfection of method, which we find only in the compositions of great writers. For having just before, though to a different purpose, described the power of bestial instinct to attain the happiness of the individual, he goeth on, in speaking of instinct as it is serviceable both to that, and to the kind, from ver. 108 to 147, to illustrate the original of society. He showeth, that though, as he had before observed, God had founded the proper bliss of each creature in the nature of its own existence, yet these not being independent individuals, but parts of a whole, God, to bless that whole, built mutual happiness on mutual wants. Now, for the supply of mutual wants, creatures must necessarily come together, which is the first ground of society amongst men. He then proceeds to that called natural, subject to paternal authority, and arising from the union of the two sexes; describes the imperfect image of it in brutes; then explains it at large in all its causes and effects. And lastly shows, that, as in fact, like mere animal society, it is founded and preserved by mutual wants, the supplial of which causeth mutual happiness, so it is likewise in right, as a rational society, by equity, gratitude, and the observance of the relation of things in general.

Ver. 147. *Nor think in nature's state they blindly trod;*] But the atheist and Hobbist, against whom Mr. Pope argueth, deny the principle of right, or of natural justice, before the invention of civil compact, which, they say, gave being to it; and accordingly have had the effrontery publicly to declare, that a state of nature was a state of war. This quite subverteth the poet's natural society; therefore, after this account of that state, he proceedeth to support the reality of it, by overthrowing the opponent principle of no natural justice; which he doth, from ver. 146 to 169, by showing in a fine description of the state of innocence, as represented in Scripture, that a state of nature was so far from being without natural justice, that it was, at first, the reign of God, where right and truth universally prevailed.

Ver. 169. *See him from nature rising slow to art!*] Strict method (in which, by this time, the reader finds the poet to be more conversant, than some were

Digitized by Google

aware of) leads him next to speak of that society, which succeeded the natural, namely, the civil. He first explains, from ver. 169 to 199, the intermediate means which led mankind from natural to civil society. These were the invention and improvement of arts. For while men lived in a mere state of nature, there was no need of any other government than the paternal; but when arts were found out and improved, then that more perfect form, under the direction of a magistrate, became necessary. And for these reasons; first, to bring those arts, already found, to perfection; and, secondly, to secure the product of them to their rightful proprietors. The poet, therefore, comes now, as we say, to the invention of arts; but being always intent on the great end for which he wrote his Essay, namely, to mortify that pride which occasions all the impious complaints against Providence, he speaks of these inventions as only lessons learned of mere animals guided by instinct, and thus, at the same time, gives a new instance of the wonderful Providence of God, who hath continued to teach mankind in a way, not only proper to humble human pride, but to raise our idea of divine wisdom to the highest pitch. This he does in a prosopopœia the most sublime that ever entered into the human imagination:

> Thus then to man the voice of nature spake:
> "Go, from the creatures thy instructions take, &c.,
> And for those arts mere instinct could afford,
> Be crowned as monarchs, or as Gods adored."

The delicacy of the poet's address in the first part of the last line is very remarkable. In this paragraph he hath given an account of those intermediate means which led men from natural to civil society, that is to say, the invention and improvement of arts. Now here, on his conclusion of this account, and on his entry upon the description of civil society itself, he connects the two parts the most gracefully that can be conceived, by this true historical circumstance, that it was the invention of those arts which raised to the magistracy, in this new society formed for the perfecting of them.

Ver. 199. *Great nature spoke;*] After all this necessary preparation, the poet shows, from ver. 198 to 209, how civil society followed, and the advantages it produced.

Ver. 209. *Thus states were formed;*] Having thus explained the original of civil society, he shows us next, from ver. 208 to 215, that to this society a civil magistrate, properly so called, did belong. And this in confutation of that idle hypothesis, which pretends that God conferred the regal title on the fathers of families; from whence men, when they had instituted society, were to fetch their governors. On the contrary, our author shows that a king was unknown till common interest, which led men to institute civil government, led them at the same time to institute a governor. However, that it is true that the same wisdom or valour, which gained regal obedience from sons to the sire, procured kings a paternal authority, and made them considered as fathers of their people, which probably was the original (and, while mistaken, continues to be the chief support) of that slavish error, antiquity representing its earliest monarchs under the idea of a common father, πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν. Afterwards, indeed, they became a kind of foster-fathers, ποιμένα λαῶν, as Homer calls one of them, till at length they began to devour that flock they had been so long accustomed to shear; and, as Plutarch says of Cecrops, ἐκ χρηστοῦ βασιλέως ἄγριον καὶ δρακοντόδη γενόμενον τυραννον.

Ver. 215. *Till then, by nature crowned, &c.*] The poet now returns, at

Digitized by Google

ver. 215 to 241, to what he had left unfinished in his description of natural society. This, which appears irregular, is, indeed, a fine instance of his thorough knowledge of method. I will explain it. This third epistle, we see, considers man with respect to society; the second, with respect to himself; and the fourth, with respect to happiness. But in none of these relations does the poet ever lose sight of him under that in which he stands to God. It will follow, therefore, that speaking of him with respect to society, the account would be most imperfect, were he not at the same time considered with respect to his religion; for between these two there is a close, and, while things continue in order, a most interesting connexion:

> True faith, true policy united ran;
> That was but love of God, and this of man.

Now religion suffering no change or depravation when man first entered into civil society, but continuing the same as in the state of nature, the author, to avoid repetition, and to bring the account of true and false religion nearer to one another, in order to contrast them by the advantage of that situation, deferred giving an account of his religion till he had spoken of the origin of civil society. Thence it is, that he here resumes the account of the state of nature, that is, so much of it as he had left untouched, which was only the religion of it. This consisting in the knowledge of the one God, the Creator of all things, he shows how men came by that knowledge: that it was either found out by reason, which giving to every effect a cause, instructed them to go from cause to cause, till they came to the first, who, being causeless, would necessarily be judged self-existent; or else that it was taught by tradition, which preserved the memory of the creation. He then tells us what these men, undebauched by false science, understood by God's nature and attributes: first, of God's nature, that they easily distinguished between the worker and the work; saw the substance of the Creator to be distinct and different from that of the creature, and so were in no danger of falling into the horrid opinion of the Greek philosophers, and their follower, Spinoza. And simple reason teaching them that the Creator was but one, they easily saw that all was right, and so were in as little danger of falling into the Manichean error, which, when oblique wit had broken the steady light of reason, imagined all was not right, having before imagined that all was not the work of One. Secondly, he shows, what they understood of God's attributes; that they easily acknowledged a Father where they found a Deity, and could not conceive a sovereign Being to be any other than a sovereign Good.

Ver. 241. *Who first taught souls enslaved, &c.*] Order leadeth the poet to speak, from ver. 240 to 245, of the corruption of civil society into tyranny, and its causes; and here, with all the dexterity of address, as well as force of truth, he observes, it arose from the violation of that great principle, which he so much insists upon throughout his Essay, that each was made for the use of all. We may be sure, that in this corruption, where right or natural justice was cast aside, and violence, the atheist's justice, presided in its stead, religion would follow the fate of civil society. We know, from ancient history, it did so. Accordingly Mr. Pope, from ver. 244 to 269, together with corrupt politics, describes corrupt religion and its causes. He first informs us, agreeable to his exact knowledge of antiquity, that it was the politician, and not the priest (as the illiterate tribe of freethinkers would make us believe), who first corrupted religion. Secondly, that the superstition he brought in was

Digitized by Google

not invented by him, as an engine to play upon others (as the dreaming atheist feigns, who would thus account for the origin of religion), but was a trap he first fell into himself:

Superstition taught the tyrant awe.

Ver. 269. *So drives self-love, &c.*] The inference our author draws from all this, from ver. 268 to 283, is, that self-love driveth through right and wrong; it causeth the tyrant to violate the rights of mankind; and it causeth the people to vindicate that violation. For self-love being common to the whole species, and setting each individual in pursuit of the same objects, it became necessary for each, if he would secure his own, to provide for the safety of another's. And thus equity and benevolence arose from that same self-love which had given birth to avarice and injustice:

His safety must his liberty restrain;
All join to guard what each desires to gain.

The poet hath not anywhere shown greater address, in the disposition of this work, than with regard to the inference before us, which not only giveth a proper and timely support to what had been advanced in the second Epistle concerning the nature and effects of self-love, but is a necessary introduction to what follows, concerning the reformation of religion and society; as we shall see presently.

Ver. 283. *'Twas then, the studious head, &c.*] The poet hath now described the rise, perfection, and decay of civil policy and religion in the more early times. But the design had been imperfect, had he dropped his discourse here. There was, in after-ages, a recovery of these from their several corruptions. Accordingly, he hath chosen that happy era for the conclusion of his song. But as good and ill governments and religions succeed one another without ceasing, he now leaveth facts, and turneth his discourse, from ver. 282 to 295, to speak of a more lasting reform of mankind, in the invention of those philosophic principles, by whose observance a policy and a religion may be for ever kept from sinking into tyranny and superstition:

'Twas then, the studious head, or generous mind,
Follow'r of God, or friend of human kind,
Poet or patriot, rose but to restore
The faith and moral, nature gave before; &c.

The easy and just transition into this subject from the foregoing is admirable. In the foregoing he had described the effects of self-love; and now, with great art and high probability, he maketh men's observations on these effects the occasion of those discoveries which they have made of the true principles of policy and religion, described in the present paragraph; and this he evidently hinteth at in that fine transition:

'Twas then, the studious head, &c.

Ver. 295. *Such is the world's great harmony, &c.*] Having thus described the true principles of civil and ecclesiastical policy, he proceedeth, from ver. 294 to 303, to illustrate the harmony between the two policies, by the universal harmony of nature:

Such is the world's great harmony, that springs
From order, union, full consent of things.

Thus, as in the beginning of this epistle he supported the general principle of mutual love or association, by considerations drawn from the particular pro-

Digitized by Google

perties of matter, and the mutual dependence between vegetable and animal life, so, in the conclusion, he hath enforced the particular principles of civil and religious society, from that general harmony, which springs, in part, from those properties and dependencies.

Ver. 303. *For forms of government let fools contest; &c.*] But now the poet, having so much commended the invention and inventors of the philosophic principles of religion and government, lest an evil use should be made of this, by men's resting in theory and speculation, as they have been always apt to do in matters where practice makes their happiness, he cautions his reader, from ver. 302 to 311, against this error. The seasonableness of this reproof will appear evident enough to those who know that mad disputes about liberty and prerogative had once well nigh overturned our constitution; while others about mystery and church authority had almost destroyed the very spirit of our religion.

Ver. 311. *Man, like the generous vine, &c.*] Having thus largely considered man in his social capacity, the poet, in order to fix a momentous truth in the mind of his reader, concludes the Epistle in recapitulating the two principles which concur to the support of this part of his character, namely, self-love and social, and in showing that they are only two different motions of the appetite to good, by which the Author of Nature hath enabled man to find his own happiness in the happiness of the whole. This he illustrates with a thought as sublime as that general harmony which he describes:

> On their own axis as the planets run,
> Yet make at once their circle round the sun;
> So two consistent motions act the soul;
> And one regards itself, and one the whole.
> Thus God and nature linked the general frame,
> And bade self-love and social be the same.

For he hath the art of converting poetical ornament into philosophic reasoning; and of improving a simile into an analogical argument; of which, more in our next.

COMMENTARY ON EPISTLE IV.

THE two foregoing Epistles having considered man with regard to the means (that is, in all his relations, whether as an individual, or a member of society), this last comes to consider him with regard to the end, that is, happiness. It opens with an invocation to happiness, in the manner of the ancient poets; who, when destitute of a patron god, applied to the muse; and if she was not at leisure, took up with any simple virtue next at hand, to inspire and prosper their undertakings. This was the ancient invocation, which few modern poets have had the art to imitate with any degree either of spirit or decorum: but our author has contrived to make his subservient to the method and reasoning of his philosophic composition. I will endeavour to explain so uncommon a beauty. It is to be observed, that the pagan deities had each their several names and places of abode, with some of which they were supposed to be more

Digitized by Google

delighted than others, and consequently to be then most propitious when invoked by the favourite name and place. Hence we find the hymns of Homer, Orpheus, and Callimachus to be chiefly employed in reckoning up the several titles and habitations by which the patron god was known and distinguished. Our poet hath made these two circumstances serve to introduce his subject. His purpose is to write of happiness: method, therefore, requires that he first define what men mean by happiness, and this he does in the ornament of a poetic invocation, in which the several names that happiness goes by are enumerated:

> Oh happiness! our being's end and aim!
> Good, pleasure, ease, content! whate'er thy name.

After the definition, that which follows next is the proposition, which is, that human happiness consists not in external advantages, but in virtue. For the subject of this Epistle is to detect the false notions of happiness, and to settle and explain the true; and this the poet lays down in the next sixteen lines. Now the enumeration of the several situations where happiness is supposed to reside, is a summary of false happiness placed in externals:

> Plant of celestial seed! if dropped below,
> Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow?
> Fair op'ning to some court's propitious shrine,
> Or deep with diamonds in the flaming mine?
> Twined with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
> Or reaped in iron harvests of the field?

The six remaining lines deliver the true notion of happiness, and show that it is rightly placed in virtue, which is summed up in these two:

> Fixed to no spot is happiness sincere
> 'Tis no where to be found, or every where.

The poet, having thus defined his terms, and laid down his proposition, proceeds to the support of his thesis, the various arguments of which make up the body of the epistle.

Ver. 19. *Ask for the learn'd, &c.*] He begins, from ver. 18 to 29, with detecting the false notions of happiness. These are of two kinds, the philosophical and popular. The popular he had recapitulated in the invocation, when happiness was called upon, at her several supposed places of abode: the philosophical only remained to be delivered:

> Ask of the learn'd the way? The learn'd are blind;
> This bids to serve, and that to shun mankind:
> Some place the bliss in action, some in ease;
> Those call it pleasure, and contentment these.

They differed as well in the means, as in the nature of the end. Some placed happiness in action, some in contemplation; the first called it pleasure, the second ease. Of those who placed it in action and called it pleasure, the route they pursued either sunk them into sensual pleasures, which ended in pain; or led them in search of imaginary perfections, unsuitable to their nature and station, see Ep. i., which ended in vanity. Of those who placed it in ease, the contemplative station they were fixed in made some, for their quiet, find truth in every thing; others, in nothing:

> Who thus define it, say they more or less
> Than this, that happiness is happiness?

Digitized by Google

The confutation of these philosophic errors he shows to be very easy, one common fallacy running through them all, namely this, that instead of telling us in what the happiness of human nature consists, which was what was asked of them, each busies himself in explaining in what he placed his own.

Ver. 29. *Take nature's path, &c.*] The poet then proceeds, from ver. 28 to 35, to reform their mistakes; and shows them that, if they will but take the road of nature, and leave that of mad opinion, they will soon find happiness to be a good of the species, and, like common sense, equally distributed to all mankind.

Ver. 35. *Remember, man, &c.*] Having exposed the two false species of happiness, the philosophical and popular, and announced the true; in order to establish the last, he goes on to a confutation of the two former.

I. He first, from ver. 34 to 49, confutes the philosophical, which, as we said, makes happiness a particular, not a general good. And this two ways; 1. From his grand principle, that God acts by general laws; the consequence of which is, that happiness, which supports the well-being of every system, must needs be universal, and not partial, as the philosophers conceived. 2. From fact, that man instinctively concurs with this designation of Providence, to make happiness universal, by his having no delight in any thing uncommunicated or uncommunicable.

Ver. 49. *Order is heaven's first law;*] II. In the second place, from ver. 48 to 67, he confutes the popular error concerning happiness, namely, that it consists in externals. This he does, first, by inquiring into the reasons of the present providential disposition of external goods,—a topic of confutation chosen with the greatest accuracy and penetration. For, if it appears they were given in the manner we see them distributed, for reasons different from the happiness of individuals, it is absurd to think that they should make part of that happiness. He shows, therefore, that disparity of external possessions among men was for the sake of society: 1. To promote the harmony and happiness of a system; because the want of external goods in some, and the abundance in others, increase general harmony in the obligor and obliged. Yet here, says he, mark the impartial wisdom of heaven; this very inequality of externals, by contributing to general harmony and order, produceth an equality of happiness amongst individuals. 2. To prevent perpetual discord amongst men equal in power, which an equal distribution of external goods would necessarily occasion. From hence he concludes, that as external goods were not given for the reward of virtue, but for many different purposes, God could not, if he intended happiness for all, place it in the enjoyment of externals.

Ver. 67. *Fortune her gifts may variously dispose, &c.*] His second argument, from ver. 66 to 73, against the popular error of happiness being placed in externals, is, that the possession of them is inseparably attended with fear; the want of them with hope; which directly crossing all their pretensions to making happy, evidently shows that God had placed happiness elsewhere. And hence, in concluding this argument, he takes occasion, from ver. 72 to 77, to upbraid the desperate folly and impiety of those who, in spite of God and nature, will yet attempt to place happiness in externals:

> Oh sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,
> By mountains piled on mountains, to the skies?
> Heav'n still with laughter the vain toil surveys,
> And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 77. *Know, all the good, &c.*] The poet having thus confuted the two errors concerning happiness, the philosophical and popular, and proved that true happiness was neither solitary and partial, nor yet placed in externals, goes on, from ver. 76 to 83, to show in what it doth consist. He had before said in general, and repeated it, that happiness lay in common to the whole species. He now brings us better acquainted with it, in a more explicit account of its nature, and tells us, it is all contained in health, peace, and competence; but that these are to be gained only by virtue, namely, by temperance, innocence, and industry.

Ver. 83. *The good or bad, &c.*] Hitherto the poet hath only considered health and peace:

> But health consists with temperance alone;
> And peace, oh virtue! peace is all thy own.

One head yet remained to be spoken to, namely, competence. In the pursuit of health and peace there is no danger of running into excess; but the case *is* different with regard to competence: here wealth and affluence would be apt to be mistaken for it, in men's passionate pursuit after external goods. To obviate this mistake, therefore, the poet shows, from ver. 82 to 93, that, as exorbitant wealth adds nothing to the happiness arising from a competence, so, as it is generally ill-gotten, it is attended with circumstances which weaken another part of this triple cord, namely, peace.

> Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense,
> Lie in three words, health, peace, and competence.
> But health consists with temperance alone;
> And peace, oh virtue! peace is all thy own.

Ver. 93. *Oh blind to truth, &c.*] Our author having thus largely confuted the mistake, that happiness consists in externals, proceeds to expose the terrible consequences of such an opinion, on the sentiments and practice of all sorts of men; making the dissolute, impious and atheistical; the religious, uncharitable and intolerant; and the good, restless and discontent. For when it is once taken for granted, that happiness consists in externals, it is immediately seen that ill men are often more happy than the good, which sets all conditions on objecting to the ways of Providence, and some even on rashly attempting to rectify his dispensations, though by the violation of all laws, divine and human. Now this being the most important part of the subject under consideration, is deservedly treated most at large. And here it will be proper to take notice of the art of the poet in making this confutation serve, at the same time, for a full solution of all objections which might be made to his main proposition, that happiness consists not in externals.

1. He begins, first of all, with the atheistical complainers; and pursues their impiety from ver. 93 to 131.

> Oh blind to truth! and God's whole scheme below, &c.

Ver. 97. *But fools, the good alone unhappy call, &c.*] He exposes their folly, even in their own notions of external goods. 1. By examples, from ver. 98 to 111, where he shows, first, that if good men have been untimely cut off, this is not to be ascribed to their virtue, but to a contempt of life, which hurried them into dangers. Secondly, That if they will still persist in ascribing untimely death to virtue, they must needs, on the same principle,

Digitized by Google

ascribe long life to it also; consequently, as the argument, in fact, concludes both ways, in logic it concludes neither.

> Say, was it virtue, more though heav'n ne'er gave,
> Lamented Digby! sunk thee to the grave?
> Tell me, if virtue made the son expire,
> Why, full of days and honour, lives the sire?

Ver. 111. *What makes all physical or moral ill?*] 2. He exposes their folly, from ver. 110 to 131, by considerations drawn from the system of nature: and these twofold, natural and moral. You accuse God, says he, because the good man is subject to natural and moral evil. Let us see whence these proceed. Natural evil is the necessary consequence of a material world so constituted. But that this constitution was best, we have proved in the first Epistle. Moral evil ariseth from the depraved will of man. Therefore neither one nor the other from God. But you say, adds the poet, to these impious complainers, that though it be fit man should suffer the miseries which he brings upon himself, by the commission of moral evil; yet it seems unfit that his innocent posterity should bear a share of the burden. To this, says he, I reply,

> We just as wisely might of heav'n complain
> That righteous Abel was destroyed by Cain,
> As that the righteous son is ill at ease,
> When his lewd father gave the dire disease.

But you will still say, Why doth not God either prevent or immediately repair these evils? You may as well ask, why he doth not work continual miracles, and every moment reverse the established laws of nature:

> Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires, &c.

This is the force of the poet's reasoning, and these the men to whom he addresseth it, namely, the libertine cavillers against Providence.

Ver. 131. *But still this world, &c.*] II. But now, so unhappy is the condition of our corrupt nature, that these are not the only complainers. Religious men are but too apt, if not to speak out, yet sometimes secretly to murmur against Providence, and say, its ways are not equal. Those especially, who are more inordinately devoted to a sect or party, are scandalised, that the just, (for such they esteem themselves,) the just, who are to judge the world, have no better a portion in their own inheritance and dominion. The poet, therefore, now leaves those more professedly impious, and turns to these less profligate complainers, from ver. 130 to 149:

> But still this world, so fitted for the knave, &c.

As the former wanted external goods to be the reward of virtue for the moral man, so these want them for the pious, in order to have a kingdom of the just. To this the poet holds it sufficient to answer: Pray first agree among yourselves who those just are. As they are not likely to do this, he bids them to rest satisfied; to remember his fundamental principle, that whatever is, is right; and to content themselves (as their religion teaches them to profess a more than ordinary submission to the will of Providence) with that common answer which he, with so much reason and piety, gives to every kind of complainer. However, though there be yet no kingdom of the just, there is still no kingdom of the unjust; both the virtuous and the vicious (whatsoever becomes of those whom every sect calls the faithful) have their

Digitized by Google

share in external goods; and what is more, the virtuous have infinitely the most enjoyment of their share:

> This world, 'tis true,
> Was made for Cæsar, but for Titus too:
> And which more blest? who chained his country? say!
> Or he whose virtue sighed to lose a day?

I have been the more solicitous to explain this last argument, and to show against whom it is directed, because a great deal depends upon it for the illustration of the sense, and the defence of the poet's reasoning. For if we suppose him to be still addressing himself to those impious complainers, confuted in the forty preceding lines, we should make him guilty of a paralogism, in the argument about the just; and in the illustration of it by the case of Calvin. For then the libertine asks, Why the just, that is, the moral man, is not rewarded? The answer is, that none but God can tell, who the just, that is, the faithful man, is. Where the term is changed, in order to support the argument; for about the truly moral man there is no dispute; about the truly faithful or the orthodox, a great deal. But take the poet right, as arguing here against religious complainers, and the reasoning is strict and logical. They ask, why the truly faithful are not rewarded? He answereth, they may be for aught you know; for none but God can tell who they are.

Ver. 149. "*But sometimes virtue starves, while vice is fed.*"] III. The poet, having dispatched these two species of murmurers, comes now to the third, and still more pardonable sort, the discontented good men, who lament only that virtue starves, while vice riots. To these he replies, from ver. 148 to 157, that, admit this to be the case, yet they have no reason to complain, either of the good man's lot in particular, or of the dispensation of Providence in general. Not of the former, because happiness, the reward of virtue, consisteth not in externals; nor of the latter, because ill men may gain wealth by commendable industry; good men want necessaries through indolence or ill conduct.

Ver. 157. *But grant him riches, &c.*] But as modest as this complaint seemeth at first view, the poet next shows, from ver. 156 to 167, that it is founded on a principle of the highest extravagance, which will never let the discontented good man rest, till he becomes as vain and foolish in his imagination as the very worst sort of complainers. For that when once he begins to think he wants what is his due, he will never know where to stop, while God hath any thing to give.

Ver. 167. *What nothing earthly gives, &c.*] But this is not all; the poet showeth next, from ver. 166 to 185, that these demands are not only unreasonable, but in the highest degree absurd likewise. For that those very goods, if granted, would be the destruction of that virtue for which they are demanded as a reward. He concludes, therefore, on the whole, that

> What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy,
> Is virtue's prize,

And that to aim at other, which not only is of no use to us here, but, what is more, will be of none hereafter, is a passion like that of an infant or a savage, where the one is impatient for what he will soon despise, and the other makes a provision for what he can never want.

Ver. 185. *To whom can riches give repute, or trust,*] The poet now enters more at large upon the matter; and still continuing his discourse to this

Digitized by Google

third sort of complainers (whom he indulgeth, as much more pardonable than the first or second, in rectifying all their doubts and mistakes), he proves, both from reason and example, how unable any of those things are, which the world most admires, to make a good man happy. For as to the philosophic mistakes concerning happiness, there being little danger of their making a general impression, he had, after a short confutation, dismissed them altogether. But external goods are those syrens, which so bewitch the world with dreams of happiness, that it is of all things the most difficult to awaken it out of its delusions; though, as he proves in an exact review of the most pretending, they dishonour bad men, and add no lustre to the good. That it is only this third, and least criminal sort of complainers, against whom the remaining part of the discourse is directed, appeareth from the poet's so frequently addressing himself, henceforward, to his friend.

I. He beginneth therefore, from ver. 184 to 205, with considering riches. 1. He examines first, what there is of real use or enjoyment in them; and showeth, they can give the good man only that very contentment in himself, and that very esteem and love from others, which he had before; and scornfully cries out to those of a different opinion:

> Oh fool! to think God hates the worthy mind,
> The lover and the love of human-kind,
> Whose life is healthful, and whose conscience clear,
> Because he wants a thousand pounds a year!

2. He next examines the imaginary value of riches, as the fountain of honour. For the objection of his adversaries standeth thus: As honour is the genuine claim of virtue, and shame the just retribution of vice; and as honour, in their opinion, follows riches, and shame, poverty, therefore the good man should be rich. He tells them in this they are much mistaken:

> Honour and shame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part; there all the honour lies.

What power then has fortune over the man? None at all; for as her favours can confer neither worth nor wisdom; so neither can her displeasure cure him of any of his follies. On his garb, indeed, she hath some little influence; but his heart still remains the same:

> Fortune in men has some small difference made;
> One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade.

So that this difference extends no further than to the habit; the pride of heart is the same both in the flaunter and the flutterer, as it is the poet's intention to insinuate by the use of those terms.

Ver. 205. *Stuck o'er with titles, &c.*] II. Then, as to nobility, by creation or birth; this too the poet shows, from ver. 204 to 217, is in itself as devoid of all real worth as the rest; because, in the first case, the honour is generally gained by no merit at all; in the second, by the merit of the first founder of the family, which, when well considered, is generally the subject rather of humiliation than of glory.

Ver. 217. *Look next on greatness; &c.*] III. The poet now unmasks, from ver. 216 to 237, the false pretences of greatness, whereby it is seen that the hero and the politician (the two characters which would monopolize that quality) do, after all their bustle, if they want virtue, effect only this, that the one proves himself a fool, and the other a knave: and virtue they but too

Digitized by Google

generally want; the art of heroism being understood to consist in ravage and desolation; and the art of politics, in circumvention. It is not success, therefore, that constitutes true greatness; but the end aimed at, and the means which are employed. And if these be right, glory will follow as the reward, whatever happens to be the issue:

> Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
> Or falling, smiles in exile or in chains,
> Like good Aurelius let him reign, or bleed
> Like Socrates, that man is great indeed.

Ver. 237. *What's fame?*] IV. With regard to fame, that still more fantastic blessing, he showeth, from ver. 236 to 259, that all of it, besides what we hear ourselves, is merely nothing; and that, even of this small portion, no more of it giveth the possessor a real satisfaction, than what is the fruit of virtue. Thus he shows, that honour, nobility, greatness, glory, so far as they have any thing real and substantial, that is, so far as they contribute to the happiness of the possessor, are the sole issue of virtue; and that neither riches, courts, armies, nor the populace, are capable of conferring them.

Ver. 259. *In parts superior what advantage lies?*] V. But lastly, the poet shows, from ver, 258 to 269, that as no external goods can make man happy, so neither is it in the power of all internal. For that even superior parts bring no more real happiness to the possessor than the rest; nay, that they put him into a worse condition; for that the quickness of apprehension and depth of penetration do but sharpen the miseries of life.

Ver. 269. *Bring then these blessings to a strict account; &c.*] Having thus proved how empty and unsatisfactory all these greatest external goods are, from an examination of their nature; he proceeds to strengthen his argument, from ver. 268 to 309, by these three further considerations:

1. That the acquirement of these goods is made with the loss of one another, or of greater, either as inconsistent with them, or as spent in attaining them.

2. That the possessors of each of these goods are generally such, as are so far from raising envy in a good man, that he would refuse to take their persons, though accompanied with their possessions: and this the poet illustrates by examples.

3. That even the possession of them altogether, where they have excluded virtue, only terminates in more enormous misery.

Ver. 309. *Know then this truth, &c.*] Having thus at length shown that happiness consists neither in external goods of any kind, nor in all kinds of internal (that is, in such of them as are not of our own acquirement), nor yet in the visionary pursuits of the philosophers, he concludes, from ver. 308 to 311, that it is to be found in virtue alone.

Ver. 311. *The only point where human bliss stands still, &c.*] Hitherto the poet had proved, negatively, that happiness consists in virtue, by showing, that it did not consist in anything else. He now, from ver. 310 to 327, proves the same positively, by an enumeration of the qualities of virtue, all naturally adapted to give and to increase human happiness; as its constancy, capacity, vigour, efficacy, activity, moderation, and self-sufficiency.

Ver. 327. *See the sole bliss heav'n could on all bestow!*] Having thus proved that happiness is placed in virtue; he proves next, from ver. 326 to 329, that it is rightly placed there; for that then, and then only, all may partake of it, and all be capable of relishing it.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 329. *Yet poor with fortune, &c.*] The poet then, with some indignation, observeth, from ver. 328 to 341, that as obvious and as evident as this truth was, yet riches and false philosophy had so blinded the discernment even of improved minds, that the possessors of the first placed happiness in externals, unsuitable to man's nature; and the followers of the latter, in refined visions, unsuitable to his situation: while the simple-minded man, with nature only for his guide, found plainly in what it should be placed.

Ver. 341. *For him alone, hope leads from goal to goal,*] But this is not all; the author shows further, from ver. 340 to 353, that when the simple-minded man, on his first setting out in the pursuit of truth in order to happiness, hath had the wisdom

To look through nature up to nature's God,

(instead of adhering to any sect or party, where there was so great odds of his choosing wrong), that then the benefit of gaining the knowledge of God's will written in the mind, is not confined there; for standing on this sure foundation, he is now no longer in danger of choosing wrong, amidst such diversities of religions; but by pursuing this grand scheme of universal benevolence, in practice as well as theory, he arrives at length to the knowledge of the revealed will of God, which is the consummation of the system of benevolence:

For him alone, hope leads from goal to goal,
And opens still, and opens on his soul;
Till lengthened on to faith, and unconfined,
It pours the bliss that fills up all the mind.

Ver. 353. *Self-love, thus pushed to social, &c.*] The poet, in the last place, marks out, from ver. 352 to 373, the progress of his good man's benevolence, pushed through natural religion to revealed, till it arrives to that height which the sacred writers describe as the very summit of christian perfection; and shows how the progress of human differs from the progress of divine benevolence. That the divine descends from whole to parts; but that the human must rise from individual to universal. His argument for this extended benevolence is, that, as God has made a whole, whose parts have a perfect relation to, and an entire dependency on each other, man, by extending his benevolence throughout that whole, acts in conformity to the will of his Creator; and therefore this enlargement of his affection becomes a duty. But the poet hath not only shown his piety in this observation, but the utmost art and address likewise in the disposition of it. The Essay on Man opens with exposing the murmurs and impious conclusions of foolish men against the present constitution of things. As it proceeds, it occasionally detects all those false principles and opinions, which led them to conclude thus perversely. Having now done all that was necessary in speculation, the author turns to practice, and ends his Essay with the recommendation of an acknowledged virtue, charity,—which, if exercised in that extent which conformity to the will of God requireth, would effectually prevent all complaints against the present order of nature,—such complaints being made with a total disregard to everything but their own private system, and seeking remedy in the disorder, and at the expense of all the rest. This observation,

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,

is important. Rochefoucault, Esprit, and their coarse and wordy disciple,

Digitized by Google

Mandeville, had observed, that self-love was the origin of all those virtues which mankind most admire, and therefore foolishly supposed it was the end likewise, and so taught that the highest pretences to disinterestedness were only the more artful disguises of self-love. But our author, who says somewhere or other,

> Of human nature, wit its worst may write;
> We all revere it in our own despite,

saw, as well as they, and everybody else, that the passions began in self-love; yet he understood human nature better than to imagine that they ended there. He knew that reason and religion could convert selfishness into its very opposite; and therefore teacheth that

> Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake:

and thus hath vindicated the dignity of human nature, and the philosophic truth of the christian doctrine.

Ver. 394. *Showed erring pride, whatever is, is right;*] The poet's address to his friend, which concludeth this Epistle so nobly, and endeth with a recapitulation of the general argument, affords me the following observation, with which I shall conclude these remarks. There is one great beauty that shines through the whole Essay. The poet, whether he speaks of man as an individual, a member of society, or the subject of happiness, never misseth an opportunity, while he is explaining his state under any of these capacities, to illustrate it in the most artful manner by the enforcement of his grand principle, that every thing tendeth to the good of the whole, from whence his system gaineth the reciprocal advantage of having that grand theorem realized by facts, and his facts justified on a principle of right or nature.

Thus I have endeavoured to analyse and explain the exact reasoning of these four Epistles. Enough, I presume, to convince every one, that it hath a precision, force, and closeness of connection rarely to be met with, even in the most formal treatises of philosophy. Yet in doing this, it is but too evident I have destroyed that grace and energy which animates the original. And now let the reader believe, if he be so disposed, what M. de Crousaz, in his critique upon this work, insinuates to be his own opinion, as well as that of his friends: "Some persons," says he, "have conjectured that Mr. Pope did not compose this Essay at once, and in a regular order; but that after he had written several fragments of poetry, all finished in their kind, (one, for example, on the parallel between reason and instinct, another upon man's groundless pride, another on the prerogatives of human nature, another on religion and superstition, another on the original of society, and several fragments besides on self-love and the passions), he tacked these together as he could, and divided them into four epistles; as, it is said, was the fortune of Homer's Rhapsodies." I suppose this extravagance will be believed just as soon of one as of the other. But M. Du Resnel, our poet's translator, is not behind-hand with the critic, in his judgment on the work. "The only reason," says he, "for which this poem can be properly termed an Essay, is, that the author has not formed his plan with all the regularity of method which it might have admitted." And again: "I was, by the unanimous opinion of all those whom I have consulted on this occasion, and, amongst these, of several Englishmen completely skilled in both languages, obliged to follow a different method. The French are not satisfied with sentiments,

Digitized by Google

however beautiful, unless they be methodically disposed. Method being the characteristic that distinguishes our performances from those of our neighbours," &c. After having given many examples of the critical skill of this wonderful man of method, in the foregoing notes, it is enough just to have quoted this flourish of self-applause, and so to leave him to the laughter of the world.

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTES ON EPISTLE I.

Ver. 7, 8. *A wild,—Or garden,*] The wild relates to the human passions, productive, as he explains in the second epistle, both of good and evil. The garden to human reason, so often tempting us to transgress the bounds God has set to it, and wander in fruitless enquiries.

Ver. 12. *Of all who blindly creep, &c.*] *i. e.* Those who only follow the blind guidance of their passions; or those who leave behind them common sense and sober reason, in their high flights through the regions of metaphysics. Both which follies are exposed in the fourth Epistle, where the popular and philosophical errors concerning happiness are detected. The figure is taken from animal life.

Ver. 15. *Laugh where we must, &c.*] Intimating, that human follies are so strangely absurd, that it is not in the power of the most compassionate, on some occasions, to restrain their mirth; and that its crimes are so flagitious, that the most candid have seldom an opportunity, on this subject, to exercise their virtue.

Ver. 16. *Vindicate the ways of God to man.*] Milton's phrase, judiciously altered, who says, justify the ways of God to man. Milton was addressing himself to believers, and delivering reasons or explaining the ways of God; this idea, the word justify precisely conveys. Pope was addressing himself to unbelievers, and exposing such of their objections whose ridicule and absurdity arises from the judicial blindness of the objectors; he, therefore, more fitly employs the word vindicate, which conveys the idea of a confutation attended with punishment. Thus suscipere vindictam legis, to undertake the defence of the law, implies punishing the violators of it.

Ver. 19, 20. *Of man, what see we but his station here,*
From which to reason, or to which refer?]

The sense is, "we see nothing of man but as he stands at present in his station here; from which station, all our reasonings on his nature and end must be drawn; and to this station they must all be referred." The consequence is, that our reasonings on his nature and end must needs be very imperfect.

Ver. 21. *Through worlds unnumbered, &c.*] Hunc cognoscimus solummodo per proprietates suas et attributa, et per sapientissimas et optimas rerum structuras et causas finales. *Newtoni Princ. Schol. gen. sub. fin.*

Ver. 30. *The strong connexions, nice dependencies,*] The thought is very noble, and expressed with great beauty and philosophic exactness. The system of the universe is a combination of natural and moral fitnesses, as the human system is of body and spirit. By the strong connexions, therefore, the poet alluded to the natural part; and by the nice dependencies, to the

Digitized by Google

moral. For the Essay on Man is not a system of naturalism, on the philosophy of Bolingbroke, but a system of natural religion, on the philosophy of Newton. Hence it is, that where he supposes disorders may tend to some greater good in the natural world, he supposes they may tend likewise to some greater good in the moral, as appears from these sublime images in the following lines:

> If plagues and earthquakes break not heav'n's design,
> Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?
> Who knows, but he whose hand the lightning forms,
> Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms,
> Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
> Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?

Ver. 35 to 42.] In these lines the poet has joined the beauty of argumentation to the sublimity of thought; where the similar instances, proposed for his adversaries' examination, show as well the absurdity of their complaints against order, as the fruitlessness of their inquiries into the arcana of the Godhead.

Ver. 41. *Or ask of yonder, &c.*] On these lines M. Voltaire thus descants: "Pope dit que l'homme ne peut savoir pourquoi les lunes de Jupiter sont moins grandes que Jupiter. Il se trompe en cela; c'est une erreur pardonnable. Il n'y a point de mathématicien qui n'eût fait voir," &c. And so goes on to show, like a great mathematician as he is, that it would be very inconvenient for the page to be as big as his lord and master. It is pity all this fine reasoning should proceed on a ridiculous blunder. The poet thus reproves the impious complainer of the order of Providence: You are dissatisfied with the weakness of your condition. But, in your situation, the nature of things requires just such a creature as you are: in a different situation, it might have required that you should be still weaker. And though you see not the reason of this in your own case, yet, that reasons there are, you may see in the case of other of God's creatures:

> Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
> Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade;
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
> Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove.

Here, says the poet, the ridicule of the weeds' and the satellites' complaint, had they the faculties of speech and reasoning, would be obvious to all; because their very situation and office might have convinced them of their folly. Your folly, says the poet to his complainers, is as great, though not so evident, because the reason is more out of sight; but that a reason there is, may be demonstrated from the attributes of the Deity. This is the poet's clear and strong reasoning; from whence, we see, he was so far from saying, that man could not know the cause why Jove's satellites were less than Jove, that all the force of his reasoning turns upon this, that man did see and know it, and should from thence conclude, that there was a cause of this inferiority as well in the rational as in the material creation.

Ver. 64. *Egypt's God:*] Called so, because the god Apis was worshipped universally over the whole land of Egypt.

Ver. 87. *Who sees with equal eye, &c.*] Matt. x. 29.

Ver. 93. *What future bliss, &c.*] It hath been objected, that "the system of the best weakens the other natural arguments for a future state; because, if the evils which good men suffer, promote the benefit of the whole, then

Digitized by Google

every thing is here in order, and nothing amiss that wants to be set right, nor has the good man any reason to expect amends, when the evils he suffered had such a tendency." To this it may be replied, 1. That the poet tells us, Ep. iv. ver. 361, that God loves from whole to parts. Therefore, if, in the beginning and progress of the moral system, the good of the whole be principally consulted, yet, on the completion of it, the good of particulars will be equally provided for. 2. The system of the best is so far from weakening those natural arguments, that it strengthens and supports them. For if those evils, to which good men are subject, be mere disorders, without any tendency to the greater good of the whole, then, though we must, indeed, conclude that they will hereafter be set right, yet this view of things, representing God as suffering disorders for no other end than to set them right, gives us too low an idea of the divine wisdom. But if those evils (according to the system of the best) contribute to the greater perfection of the whole, such a reason may be then given for their permission, as supports our idea of divine wisdom to the highest religious purposes. Then, as to the good man's hopes of retribution, these still remain in their original force: for our idea of God's justice, and how far that justice is engaged to a retribution, is exactly and invariably the same on either hypothesis. For though the system of the best supposes that the evils themselves will be fully compensated by the good they produce to the whole, yet this is so far from supposing that particulars shall suffer for a general good, that it is essential to this system, that, at the completion of things, when the whole is arrived to the state of utmost perfection, particular and universal good shall coincide;

> Such is the world's great harmony, that springs
> From order, union, full consent of things:
> Where small and great, where weak and mighty, made
> To serve, not suffer, strengthen, not invade, &c.—Ep. iii. ver. 295.

Which coincidence can never be, without a retribution to each good man for the evils he has suffered here below.

Ver. 97. *from home,*] The construction is,—The soul, uneasy and confined, being from home, expatiates, etc. By which words, it was the poet's purpose to teach, that the present life is only a state of probation for another, more suitable to the essence of the soul, and to the free exercise of its qualities.

Ver. 110. *He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;*] The French translator, M. l'Abbé du Resnel, has turned the line thus:

> Il ne désire point cette céleste flamme
> Qui des purs Seraphins dévore, et nourrit l'ame.

i.e. The savage does not desire that heavenly flame, which at the same time that it devours the souls of pure seraphim, nourishes them. On which M. de Crousaz (who, by the assistance of a translation abounding in these absurdities, writ a Commentary on the Essay on Man, in which we find nothing but greater absurdities) remarks, "Mr. Pope, in exalting the fire of his poetry by an antithesis, throws occasionally his ridicule on those heavenly spirits. The Indian, says the poet, contents himself without any thing of that flame, which devours at the same time that it nourisheth." *Comm.* p. 77. But the poet is clear of this imputation. Nothing can be more grave or sober than his English, on this occasion; nor, I dare say, to do the translator justice, did he aim to be ridiculous. It is the sober, solid theology of the Sorbonne. Indeed, had such a writer as Mr. Pope used this school-

Digitized by Google

jargon, we might have suspected he was not so serious as he should be. The reader, as he goes along, will see more of this translator's peculiarities. And the conclusion of the commentary on the fourth Epistle will show why I have been so careful to preserve them.

Ver. 131. *Ask for what end, &c.*] If there be any fault in these lines, it is not in the general sentiment, but in the ill choice of instances made use of in illustrating it. It is the highest absurdity to think that earth is man's foot-stool, his canopy the skies, and the heavenly bodies lighted up principally for his use; yet surely, it is very excusable to suppose fruits and minerals given for this end.

Ver. 150. *Then Nature deviates; &c.*] "While comets move in very eccentric orbs, in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way in orbs concentric; some inconsiderable irregularities excepted, which may have risen from the mutual actions of comets and planets upon one another, and which will be apt to increase, till this system wants a reformation." *Sir Isaac Newton's Optics, Quæst. ult.*

Ver. 155. *If plagues, &c.*] What hath misled M. de Crousaz in his censure of this passage, is his supposing the comparison to be between the effects of two things in this sublunary world; when not only the elegancy, but the justness of it, consists in its being between the effects of a thing in the universe at large, and the familiar, known effects of one in this sublunary world. For the position enforced in these lines is this, that partial evil tends to the good of the whole:

> Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
> May, must be right, as relative to all.—Ver. 51.

How does the poet enforce it? If you will believe this critic, in illustrating the effects of partial moral evil in a particular system, by that of partial natural evil in the same system, and so he leaves his position in the lurch. But the poet reasons at another rate. The way to prove his point, he knew, was to illustrate the effect of partial moral evil in the universe, by partial natural evil in a particular system. Whether partial moral evil tend to the good of the universe, being a question which, by reason of our ignorance of many parts of that universe, we cannot decide but from known effects, the rules of good reasoning require that it be proved by analogy, *i.e.* setting it by, and comparing it with, a thing clear and certain; and it is a thing clear and certain, that partial natural evil tends to the good of our particular system.

Ver. 157. *Who knows but He, &c.*] The sublimity with which the great Author of Nature is here characterized, is but the second beauty of this fine passage. The greatest is the making the very dispensation objected to, the periphrasis of his title.

Ver. 174. *And little less than angels, &c.*] "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." Psalm viii. 5.

Ver. 202. *And stunned him, &c.*] This instance is poetical, and even sublime, but misplaced. He is arguing philosophically in a case that required him to employ the real objects of sense only: and, what is worse, he speaks of this as a real object, If nature thundered, &c. The case is different where, in ver. 253, he speaks of the motion of the heavenly bodies, under the sublime conception of ruling angels: for whether there be ruling angels or no, there is real motion, which was all his argument wanted; but if there be no

Digitized by Google

music of the spheres, there was no real sound, which his argument was obliged to find.

Ver. 209. *Mark how it mounts, to man's imperial race,*] M. du Resnel has turned the latter part of the line thus,

Jusqu'à l'homme, ce chef, ce roi de l'univers.

"Even to man, this head, this king of the universe," which is so sad a blunder, that it contradicts the poet's peculiar system; who, although he allows man to be king of this inferior world, yet he thinks it madness to make him king of the universe. If the philosophy and argument of the poem could not teach him this, yet methinks the poet's own words, in this very Epistle, might have prevented his mistake:

So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown.

If the translator imagined that Mr. Pope was speaking ironically where he talks of man's imperial race, and so would heighten the ridicule of the original by *ce roi de l'univers*, the mistake is still worse; for the force of the argument depends upon its being said seriously; the poet being here speaking of a scale from the highest to the lowest in the mundane system.

Ver. 224. *For ever separate, &c.*] Near, by the similitude of the operation; separate, by the immense difference in the nature of the powers.

Ver. 226. *What thin partitions, &c.*] So thin, that the atheistic philosophers, as Protagoras, held that thought was only sense: and from thence concluded, that every imagination or opinion of every man was true; Πᾶσα φαντασία ἐστὶν ἀληθής. But the poet determines more philosophically that they are really and essentially different, how thin soever the partition be by which they are divided. Thus (to illustrate the truth of this observation) when a geometer considers a triangle, in order to demonstrate the equality of its three angles to two right ones, he has the picture or image of some sensible triangle in his mind, which is sense; yet, notwithstanding, he must needs have the notion or idea of an intellectual triangle likewise, which is thought; for this plain reason, because every image or picture of a triangle must needs be obtusangular, or rectangular, or acutangular; but that which, in his mind, is the subject of his proposition, is the ratio of a triangle, undetermined to any of these species. On this account it was that Aristotle said, Νοήματά τινι διοίσει, τοῦ μὴ φαντάσματα εἶναι, ἢ οὐδὲ ταῦτα φαντάσματα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασμάτων. "The conceptions of the mind differ somewhat from sensible images; they are not sensible images, and yet not quite free or disengaged from sensible images."

Ver. 243. *Or in the full creation leave a void, &c.*] This is only an illustrating allusion to the Aristotelian doctrines of *plenum* and *vacuum*, the full and void here meant relating not to matter but to life.

Ver. 247. *And if each system in gradation roll,*] Alluding to the motion of the planetary bodies of each system, and to the figures described by that motion.

Ver. 251. *Let earth unbalanced*] *i.e.* Being no longer kept within its orbit by the different directions of its progressive and attractive motions,—which, like equal weights in a balance, keep it in an equilibre.

Ver. 253. *Let ruling angels, &c.*] The poet, throughout this work, has, with great art, used an advantage which his employing a Platonic principle for the foundation of his Essay, had afforded him; and that is, the expressing

Digitized by Google

nimself, as here, in Platonic language, which, luckily for his purpose, is highly poetical, at the same time that it adds a grace to the uniformity of his reasoning.

Ver. 259. *What if the foot, &c.*] This fine illustration in defence of the system of nature, is taken from St. Paul, who employed it to defend the system of grace.

Ver. 266. *The great directing* MIND, *&c.*] "Veneramur autem et colimus ob dominium. Deus enim sine dominio, providentiâ, et causis finalibus, nihil aliud est quam fatum et natura." *Newtoni Princip. Schol. gener. sub finem.*

Ver. 268. *Whose body nature is, &c.*] M. de Crousaz remarks, on this line, that "A Spinozist would express himself in this manner." I believe he would; for so the infamous Toland has done, in his atheist's liturgy, called Pantheisticon. But so would St. Paul likewise, who, writing on this subject, the omnipresence of God in his Providence, and in his Substance, says, in the words of a pantheistical Greek poet, *In him we live, and move, and have our being; i.e.* we are parts of him, *his offspring:* And the reason is, because a religious theist and an impious pantheist both profess to believe the omnipresence of God. But would Spinoza, as Mr. Pope does, call God the great directing mind of all, who hath intentionally created a perfect universe? Or would a Spinozist have told us,

> The workman from the work distinct was known?

a line that overturns all Spinozism from its very foundations. But this sublime description of the Godhead contains not only the divinity of St. Paul; but, if that will not satisfy the men he writes against, the philosophy likewise of Sir Isaac Newton. The poet says,

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body nature is, and God the soul; &c.

The philosopher:—"In ipso continentur et moventur universa, sed absque mutuâ passione. Deus nihil patitur ex corporum motibus; illa nullam sentiunt resistentiam ex omnipræsentiâ Dei.—Corpore omni et figurâ corporeâ destituitur.—Omnia regit et omnia cognoscit.—Cum unaquæque spatii particula sit semper, et unumquodque durationis indivisibile momentum, ubique certe rerum omnium Fabricator ac Dominus non erit nunquam, nusquam."

Mr. Pope:

> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part.
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
> As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
> To him, no high, no low, no great, no small;
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

Sir Isaac Newton:—"Annon ex phænomenis constat esse entem incorporeum, viventem, intelligentem, omnipræsentem, qui in spatio infinito, tanquam sensorio suo, res ipsas intime cernat, penitusque perspiciat, totasque intra se præsens præsentes complectatur?"

But now, admitting there were an ambiguity in these expressions, so great that a Spinozist might employ them to express his own particular principles; and such a thing might well be, because the Spinozists, in order to hide the impiety of their principle, are wont to express the omnipresence of God in

Digitized by Google

terms that any religious theist might employ; in this case, I say, how are we to judge of the poet's meaning? Surely by the whole tenor of his argument. Now, take the words in the sense of the Spinozists, and he is made, in the conclusion of the epistle, to overthrow all he had been advancing throughout the body of it: for Spinozism is the destruction of an universe, where every thing tends, by a foreseen contrivance in all its parts, to the perfection of the whole. But allow him to employ the passage in the sense of St. Paul, That we, and all creatures, live, and move, and have our being in God; and then it will be seen to be the most logical support of all that had preceded. For the poet, having, as we say, laboured through his epistle to prove, that every thing in the universe tends, by a foreseen contrivance, and a present direction of all its parts, to the perfection of the whole, it might be objected, that such a disposition of things, implying in God a painful, operose, and inconceivable extent of Providence, it could not be supposed that such care extended to all, but was confined to the more noble parts of the creation. This gross conception of the First Cause the poet exposes, by showing that God is equally and intimately present to every particle of matter, to every sort of substance, and in every instant of being.

Ver. 277. *As full, as perfect, &c.*] Which M. du Resnel translates thus,

> Dans un homme ignoré sous une humble chaumière,
> Que dans le séraphin, rayonnant de lumière.

i.e. "As well in the ignorant man, who inhabits a humble cottage, as in the seraph encompassed with rays of light." The translator, in good earnest thought, that a vile man that mourned could be no other than some poor country cottager. Which has betrayed M. de Crousaz into this important remark: "For all that, we sometimes find in persons of the lowest rank, a fund of probity and resignation which preserves them from contempt; their minds are, indeed, but narrow, yet fitted to their station," &c. *Comm. p.* 120. But Mr. Pope had no such childish idea in his head. He was here opposing the human species to the angelic; and so spoke of the first, when compared to the latter, as vile and disconsolate. The force and beauty of the reflection depend upon this sense; and, what is more, the propriety of it.

Ver. 278. *As the rapt seraph, &c.*] Alluding to the name seraphim, signifying burners.

Ver. 294. *One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.*] It will be difficult to think any caviller should have objected to this conclusion; especially when the author, in this very epistle, has himself thus explained it:

> Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
> May, must be right, as relative to all.
> So man, who here seems principal alone,
> Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown;
> Touches some wheel, or vergos to some goal:
> 'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

But without any regard to the evidence of this illustration, M. de Crousaz exclaims: "See the general conclusion, All that is, is right. So that at the sight of Charles the First losing his head on the scaffold, we must have said, this is right; at the sight too of his judges condemning him, we must have said, this is right; at the sight of some of these judges, taken and condemned for the action which he had owned to be right, we must have cried out, this is doubly right." Never was any thing more amazing than that the absurdities arising from the sense in which this critic takes the great principle,

Digitized by Google

of whatever is, is right, did not show him his mistake. For could any one in his senses employ a proposition in a meaning from whence such evident absurdities immediately arise? I have observed, that this conclusion, whatever is, is right, is a consequence of these premises, that partial evil tends to universal good; which the author employs as a principle to humble the pride of man, who would impiously make God accountable for his creation. What then does common sense teach us to understand by whatever is, is right? Did the poet mean right with regard to man, or right with regard to God; right with regard to itself, or right with regard to its ultimate tendency? Surely with regard to God; for he tells us his design is to vindicate the ways of God to man. Surely with regard to its ultimate tendency; for he tells us again, all partial ill is universal good. Ver. 291. Now is this any encouragement to vice? Or does it take off from the crime of him who commits it, that God providentially produces good out of evil? Had Mr. Pope abruptly said in his conclusion, the result of all is, that whatever is, is right, the objector had even then been inexcusable for putting so absurd a sense upon the words, when he might have seen that it was a conclusion from the general principle above-mentioned; and therefore must necessarily have another meaning. But what must we think of him, when the poet, to prevent mistakes, had delivered, in this very place, the principle itself, together with this conclusion as the consequence of it?

> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

He could not have told his reader plainer that his conclusion was the consequence of that principle, unless he had written therefore in great church letters.

NOTES ON EPISTLE II.

Ver. 3. *Placed on this isthmus, &c.*] As the poet hath given us this sublime description of man for the very contrary purpose to what sceptics are wont to employ such kind of paintings, namely, not to deter men from the search, but to excite them to the discovery of truth; he hath, with great judgment, represented men as doubting and wavering between the right and wrong object; from which state it is allowable to hope he may be relieved by a careful and circumspect use of reason. On the contrary, had he supposed man so blind as to be busied in choosing, or doubtful in his choice, between two objects equally wrong, the case had appeared desperate, and all study of man had been effectually discouraged. But M. du Resnel, not seeing the reason and beauty of this conduct, hath run into the very absurdity, which I have here shown Mr. Pope so artfully avoided. Of which the learned reader may take the following proofs. The poet says,

> Man hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest.

Now he tells us it is man's duty to act, not rest, as the stoics thought; and,

Digitized by Google

to this their principle, the latter word alludes, whose virtue, as he says afterwards, is

Fixed as in a frost,
Contracted all, retiring to the breast:
But strength of mind is exercise, not rest.

Now hear the translator, who is not for mincing matters:

Seroit-il en naissant au travail condamné?
Aux douceurs du répos seroit-il destiné?

and these are both wrong, for man is neither condemned to slavish toil and labour, nor yet indulged in the luxury of repose. The poet says,

In doubt to deem himself a God, or beast.

i.e. He doubts, as appears from the very next line, whether his soul be mortal or immortal; one of which is the truth, namely, its immortality, as the poet himself teaches, when he speaks of the omnipresence of God:

Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part.—Epist. i. 275.

The translator, as we say, unconscious of the poet's purpose, rambles as before:

Tantôt de son esprit admirant l'excellence,
Il pense qu'il est Dieu, qu'il en a la puissance;
Et tantôt gémissant des besoins de son corps,
Il croit que de la brute, il n'a que les ressorts

Here his head, turned to a sceptical view, was running on the different extravagances of Plato in his theology, and of Descartes in his physiology. Sometimes, says he, man believes himself a real God; and sometimes again, a mere machine: things quite out of the poet's thought in this place. Again, the poet, in a beautiful allusion to Scripture sentiments, breaks out into this just and moral reflection on man's condition here,

Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err.

The translator turns this fine and sober thought into the most outrageous scepticism:

Ce n'est que pour mourir, qu'il est né, qu'il respire;
Et toute sa raison n'est presque qu'un délire.

and so make his author directly contradict himself, where he says of man, that he hath

Too much knowledge for the sceptic side.

Ver. 10. *Born but to die, &c.*] The author's meaning is, that as we are born to die, and yet do enjoy some small portion of life, so, though we reason to err, yet we comprehend some few truths. This is the weak state of reason, in which error mixes itself with all its true conclusions concerning man's nature.

Ver. 11. *Alike in ignorance, &c.*] *i.e.* The proper sphere of his reason is so narrow, and the exercise of it so nice, that the too immoderate use of it is attended with the same ignorance that proceeds from the not using it at all. Yet though, in both these cases, he is abused by himself, he has it still in his own power to disabuse himself, in making his passions subservient to the means, and regulating his reason by the end of life.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 12. *Whether he thinks too little or too much:*] It is so true, that ignorance arises as well from pushing our inquiries too far, as from not carrying them far enough, that we may observe, when speculations, even in science, are carried beyond a certain point,—that point where use is reasonably supposed to end, and mere curiosity to begin,—they conclude in the most extravagant and senseless inferences, such as the unreality of matter; the reality of space; the servility of the will, &c. The cause of this sudden fall out of full light into utter darkness, seems not to arise from the natural condition of things, but to be the arbitrary decree of infinite wisdom and goodness, which imposed a barrier to the extravagances of its giddy, lawless creature, always inclined to pursue truths of less importance too far, and to neglect those which are more necessary for his improvement in his station here.

Ver. 17. *Sole judge of Truth, in endless error hurled:*] Some have imagined that the author, by, in endless error hurled, meant, cast into endless error, or into the regions of endless error, and therefore have taken notice of it as an incongruity of speech. But they neither understood the poet's language, nor his sense. To hurl and cast are not synonymous; but related only as the genus and species; for to hurl signifies not simply to cast, but to cast backward and forward, and is taken from the rural game called hurling. So that, into endless error hurled, as these critics would have it, would have been a barbarism. His words therefore signify tossed about in endless error; and this he intended they should signify, as appears from the antithesis, sole judge of truth. So that the sense of the whole is, "Though, as sole judge of truth, he is now fixed and stable; yet, as involved in endless error, he is now again hurled, or tossed up and down in it." This shows us how cautious we ought to be in censuring the expressions of a writer, one of whose characteristic qualities was correctness of expression and propriety of sentiment.

Ver. 20. *Go, measure earth, &c.*] Alluding to the noble and useful labours of the modern mathematicians, in measuring a degree at the equator and the polar circle, in order to determine the true figure of the earth; of great importance to astronomy and navigation; and which proved of equal honour to the wonderful sagacity of Newton.

Ver. 22. *Correct old Time, &c.*] This alludes to Newton's Grecian Chronology, which he reformed on those two sublime conceptions, the difference between the reigns of kings, and the generations of men; and the position of the colures of the equinoxes and solstices at the time of the Argonautic expedition.

Ver. 29, 30. *Go, teach Eternal Wisdom, &c.*] These two lines are a conclusion from all that had been said from ver. 18 to this effect: "Go now, vain man, elated with thy acquirements in real science, and imaginary intimacy with God; go, and run into all the extravagances I have exploded in the first Epistle, where thou pretendest to teach Providence how to govern; then drop into the obscurities of thy own nature, and thereby manifest thy ignorance and folly."

Ver. 31. *Superior beings, &c.*] In these lines the poet speaks to this effect: "But to make you fully sensible of the difficulty of this study, I shall instance in the great Newton himself, whom, when superior beings, not long since, saw capable of unfolding the whole law of nature, they were in doubt whether the owner of such prodigious sagacity should not be reckoned of their order, just as men, when they see the surprising marks

Digitized by Google

of reason in an ape, are almost tempted to rank him with their own kind." And yet this wondrous man could go no further in the knowledge of himself than the generality of his species. M. du Resnel, who understood nothing of all this, translates these four celebrated lines thus:

> Des célestes esprits la vive intelligence
> Regarde avec pitié notre foible science;
> Newton, le grand Newton, que nous admirons tous,
> Est peut-être pour eux, ce qu'un singe est pour nous.

But it is not the pity, but the admiration of the celestial spirits which is here spoken of. And it was for no slight cause they admired; it was, to see a mortal man unfold the whole law of nature. By which we see it was not Mr. Pope's intention to bring any of the ape's qualities, but its sagacity, into the comparison. But why the ape's, it may be said, rather than the sagacity of some more decent animal, particularly the half-reasoning elephant, as the poet calls it; which, as well on account of this its excellence, as for its having no ridiculous side, like the ape, on which it could be viewed, seems better to have deserved this honour? I reply, because, as a shape resembling human (which only the ape has) must be joined with great sagacity, to raise a suspicion that the animal, thus endowed, is related to man, so the spirituality, which Newton had in common with angels, joined to a penetration superior to man, made those beings suspect he might be one of their order. On this ground of relation, we see the whole beauty of the thought depends. And here let me take notice of a new species of the sublime, of which our poet may be justly said to be the maker; so new, that we have yet no name for it, though of a nature distinct from every other known beauty of poetry. The two great perfections in works of genius are wit and sublimity. Many writers have been witty; some have been sublime; and a few have even possessed both these qualities separately. But none, that I know of, besides our poet, hath had the art to incorporate them; of which he hath given many examples, both in this Essay, and his other poems; one of the noblest being the passage in question. This seems to be the last effort of the imagination to poetical perfection; and in this compounded excellence, the wit receives a dignity from the sublime, and the sublime a splendour from the wit, which, in their state of separate existence, they neither of them had. Yet a late critic, who writes with the decision of a Lord of Session on Parnassus, thinks otherwise: "It may be gathered," says he, "from what is said above, that wit and ridicule make not an agreeable mixture with grandeur. Dissimilar emotions have a fine effect in a slow succession; but in a rapid succession which approaches to co-existence, they will not be relished."[1] What pity is it, that the poet should here confute the critic, by doing what the critic, with his rules, teaches us cannot be done. Boileau, who was both poet and critic, had a clear view of this excellence in idea; while the mere critic had no idea of what had been clearly set before his eyes.

> On peut être à la fois et pompeux et plaisant;
> Et je hais un sublime ennuyeux et posant.

Ver. 37. *Who saw its fires here rise, &c.*] Sir Isaac Newton, in calculating the velocity of a comet's motion, and the course it describes, when it becomes visible in its descent to, and ascent from, the sun, conjectured, with the

[1] Lord Kames, Elements of Criticism, vol. i. p. 377.

Digitized by Google

highest appearance of truth, that comets revolve perpetually round the sun, in ellipses vastly eccentrical, and very nearly approaching to parabolas. In which he was greatly confirmed, in observing between two comets a coincidence in their perihelions, and a perfect agreement in their velocities.

Ver. 45. *vanity, or dress,*] These are the first parts of what the poet, in the preceding line, calls the scholar's equipage of pride. By vanity, is meant that luxuriancy of thought and expression in which a writer indulges himself, to show the fruitfulness of his fancy or invention. By dress, is to be understood a lower degree of that practice, in amplification of thought and ornamental expression, to give force to what the writer would convey: but even this, the poet, in a severe search after truth, condemns; and with great judgment, conciseness of thought, and simplicity of expression, being as well the best instruments, as the best vehicles of truth. Shakespeare touches upon this latter advantage with great force and humour. The flatterer says to Timon in distress, "I cannot cover the monstrous bulk of their ingratitude with any size of words." The other replies, "Let it go naked; men may see't the better."

Ver. 46. *Or learning's luxury, or idleness;*] The luxury of learning consists in dressing up and disguising old notions in a new way, so as to make them more fashionable and palatable; instead of examining and scrutinizing their truth. As this is often done for pomp and show, it is called luxury; as it is often done too to save pains and labour, it is called idleness.

Ver. 47. *Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,*] Such as the mathematical demonstration concerning the small quantity of matter; the endless divisibility of it, &c.

Ver. 48. *Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;*] *i.e.* when admiration has set the mind on the rack.

Ver. 49. *Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts*
Of all our vices have created arts;]

i. e. Those parts of Natural Philosophy, Logic, Rhetoric, Poetry, &c., which administer to luxury, deceit, ambition, effeminacy, &c.

Ver. 74. *Reason, the future, &c.*] *i. e.* by experience, reason collects the future; and by argumentation, the consequence.

Ver. 109. *Nor God alone, &c.*

The translator turns it thus:

Dieu lui-même, Dieu sort de son profond repos.

And so, makes an epicurean God, of the Governor of the universe. M. de Crousaz does not spare this expression of God's coming out of his profound repose. "It is," says he, "excessively poetical, and presents us with ideas which we ought not to dwell upon," &c. and then, as usual, blames the author for the blunder of his translator. *Comm.* p. 158.

Ver. 109. *Nor God alone, &c.*] These words are only a simple affirmation in the poetic dress of a similitude, to this purpose: "Good is not only produced by the subdual of the passions, but by the turbulent exercise of them," —a truth conveyed under the most sublime imagery that poetry could conceive or paint. For the author is here only showing the providential issue of the passions, and how, by God's gracious disposition, they are turned away from their natural destructive bias, to promote the happiness of mankind. As to the method in which they are to be treated by man, in whom they are found, all that he contends for, in favour of them, is only this, that they

Digitized by Google

should not be quite rooted up and destroyed, as the stoics, and their followers, in all religions, foolishly attempted. For the rest, he constantly repeats this advice,

> The action of the stronger to suspend,
> Reason still use, to reason still attend.

Ver. 133. *A man, perhaps, &c.*] "Antipater Sidonius Poeta omnibus annis uno die natali tantum corripiebatur febre, et eo consumptus est satis longâ senectâ." *Plin.* l. vii. *N. H.* This Antipater was in the times of Crassus, and is celebrated for the quickness of his parts by Cicero.

Ver. 147. *Reason itself, &c.*] The Poet, in some other of his epistles, gives examples of the doctrines and precepts here delivered. Thus, in that Of the Use of Riches, he has illustrated this truth in the character of Cotta :

> Old Cotta shamed his fortune and his birth,
> Yet was not Cotta void of wit or worth.
> What though (the use of barb'rous spits forgot)
> His kitchen vied in coolness with his grot?
> If Cotta lived on pulse, it was no more
> Than bramins, saints, and sages did before.

Ver. 149. *We, wretched subjects, &c.*] St. Paul himself did not choose to employ other arguments, when disposed to give us the highest idea of the usefulness of christianity (Rom. vii.) But it may be, the poet finds a remedy in natural religion. Far from it. He here leaves reason unrelieved. What is this, then, but an intimation that we ought to seek for a cure in that religion, which only dares profess to give it?

Ver. 163. *'Tis hers to rectify, &c.*] The meaning of this precept is, That as the ruling passion is implanted by nature, it is reason's office to regulate, direct, and restrain, but not to overthrow it. To reform the passion of avarice, for instance, into a parsimonious dispensation of the public revenues: to direct the passion of love, whose object is worth and beauty,

> To the first good, first perfect, and first fair,

the τὸ καλὸν τ' ἀγαθὸν, as his master Plato advises; and to restrain spleen to a contempt and hatred of vice. This is what the poet meant, and what every unprejudiced man could not but see he must needs mean, by rectifying the master passion, though he had not confined us to this sense, in the reason he gives of his precept in these words:

> A mightier pow'r the strong direction sends,
> And several men impels to several ends;

for what ends are they which God impels to, but the ends of virtue?

Ver. 175. *Th' eternal art, &c.*] The author has, throughout these epistles, explained his meaning to be that vice is, in its own nature, the greatest of evils, and produced through the abuse of man's free will:

> What makes all physical and moral ill?
> There deviates nature, and here wanders will:

but that God in his infinite goodness, deviously turns the natural bias of its malignity to the advancement of human happiness. A doctrine very different from the Fable of the Bees, which impiously and foolishly supposes it to have that natural tendency.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 204. *The god within the mind.*] A Platonic phrase for conscience; and here employed with great judgment and propriety. For conscience either signifies, speculatively, the judgment we pass of things upon whatever principles we chance to have, and then it is only opinion, a very unable judge and divider; or else it signifies, practically, the application of the eternal rule of right (received by us as the law of God) to the regulation of our actions; and then it is properly conscience, the god (or the law of God) within the mind, of power to divide the light from the darkness in this Chaos of the passions.

Ver. 253. *Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally*
The common interest, &c.]

As these lines have been misunderstood, I shall give the reader their plain and obvious meaning. To these frailties, says he, we owe all the endearments of private life; yet when we come to that age, which generally disposes men to think more seriously of the true value of things, and consequently of their provision for a future state, the consideration, that the grounds of those joys, loves, and friendships, are wants, frailties, and passions, proves the best expedient to wean us from the world; a disengagement so friendly to that provision we are now making for another state. The observation is new, and would in any place be extremely beautiful, but has here an infinite grace and propriety, as it so well confirms, by an instance of great moment, the general thesis, that God makes ill, at every step, productive of good.

Ver. 270. *the poet in his muse.*] The author having said, that no one could change his own profession or views for those of another, intended to carry his observations still further, and show that men were unwilling to exchange their own acquirements even for those of the same kind, confessedly larger, and infinitely more eminent in another. To this end he wrote,

> What partly pleases, totally will shock:
> I question much, if Toland would be Locke.

But wanting another proper instance of this truth, he reserved the lines above for some following edition of this Essay, which he did not live to give.

Ver. 280. *And beads and pray'r-books are the toys of age:*] A satire on what is called, in popery, the *Opus operatum.* As this is a description of the circle of human life returning into itself by a second childhood, the poet has with great elegance concluded his description with the same image with which he set out, "And life's poor play is o'er."

Ver. 286. *And each vacuity of sense by pride:*] An eminent casuist, Father Francis Garasse, in his Somme Théologique, has drawn a very charitable conclusion from this principle, which he hath well illustrated: "Selon la justice," says this equitable divine, "tout travail honnête doit être recompensé de louange ou de satisfaction. Quand les bons esprits font un ouvrage excellent, ils sont justement recompensés par les suffrages du public. Quand un pauvre esprit travaille beaucoup, pour faire un mauvais ouvrage, il n'est pas juste ni raisonnable, qu'il attende des louanges publiques; car elles ne lui sont pas dues. Mais afin que ses travaux ne demeurent pas sans recompense, Dieu lui donne une satisfaction personelle, que personne ne lui peut envier sans une injustice plus que barbare; tout ainsi que Dieu, qui est juste, donne de la satisfaction aux grenouilles de leur chant. Autrement la blâme public, joint à leur mécontentement, seroit suffisant pour les réduire au désespoir."

Digitized by Google

NOTES ON EPISTLE III.

Ver. 3. *superfluous health,*] Immoderate labour and immoderate study are equally the impairers of health. They whose station sets them above both, must needs have an abundance of it, which not being employed in the common service, but wasted in luxury and folly, the post properly calls a superfluity.

Ver. 4. *impudence of wealth,*] Because wealth pretends to be wisdom, wit, learning, honesty, and, in short, all the virtues in their turns.

Ver. 3—6.] M. du Resnel, not seeing into the admirable purpose of the caution contained in these four lines, hath quite dropped the most material circumstances contained in the last of them; and what is worse, for the sake of a foolish antithesis, hath destroyed the whole propriety of the thought in the two first; and so, between both, hath left his author neither sense nor system.

Dans le sein du bonheur, ou de l'adversité.

Now, of all men, those in adversity have least needs of this caution, as being least apt to forget, that God consults the good of the whole, and provides for it by procuring mutual happiness by means of mutual wants; it being seen that such who yet retain the smart of any fresh calamity, are most compassionate to others labouring under distresses, and most prompt and ready to relieve them.

Ver. 9. *See plastic nature, &c.*] M. du Resnel mistook this description of the preservation of the material universe, by the quality of attraction, for a description of its creation; and so translates it

Vois du sein du Chaos éclater la lumière,
Chaque atome ébranlé courir pour s'embrasser, &c.

This destroys the poet's fine analogical argument, by which he proves, from the circumstance of mutual attraction in matter, that man, while he seeks society, and thereby promotes the good of his species, co-operates with God's general dispensation; whereas the circumstance of a creation proves nothing but a Creator.

Ver. 12. *Formed and impelled, &c.*] Formed and impelled are not words of a loose, undistinguishable meaning thrown in to fill up the verse. This is not our author's way; they are full of sense, and of the most philosophical precision. For to make matter so cohere as to fit it for the uses intended by its Creator, a proper configuration of its insensible parts is as necessary as that quality so equally and universally conferred upon it, called attraction. To express the first part of this thought, our author says formed; and to express the latter, impelled.

Ver. 19, 20. *Like bubbles, &c.*] M. du Resnel translates these two lines thus:

Sort du néant, y rentre, et reparoit au jour.

He is here, indeed, consistently wrong: for having, as we said, mistaken the poet's account of the preservation of matter for the creation of it, he commits

Digitized by Google

the very same mistake with regard to the vegetable and animal systems; and so talks now, though with the latest, of the production of things out of nothing. Indeed, by his speaking of their returning into nothing, he has subjected his author to M. de Crousaz's censure: "Mr. Pope descends to the most vulgar prejudices, when he tells us that each being returns to nothing: the vulgar think that what disappears is annihilated," &c. *Comm.* p. 221.

Ver. 22. *One all-extending, all-preserving soul,*] Which, in the language of Sir Isaac Newton, is "Deus omnipræsens est, non per virtutem solam, sed etiam per substantiam: nam virtus sine substantiâ subsistere non potest." *Newt. Princ. Schol. gen. sub fin.*

Ver. 23. *greatest with the least;*] As acting more strongly and immediately in beasts, whose instinct is plainly an external reason; which made an old school-man say, with great elegance, "Deus est anima brutorum:"

In this 'tis God directs.

Ver. 45. *See all things for my use!*] On the contrary, the wise man hath said, "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Prov. xvi. 4.

Ver. 50. *Be man the wit and tyrant of the whole:*] Alluding to the witty system of that philosopher,[1] which made animals mere machines, insensible of pain or pleasure; and so encouraged men in the exercise of that tyranny over their fellow-creatures, consequent on such a principle.

Ver. 152. *Man walked with beast, joint tenant of the shade;*] The poet still takes his imagery from Platonic ideas, for the reason given above. Plato had said, from old tradition, that, during the golden age, and under the reign of Saturn, the primitive language then in use was common to man and beasts. Moral instructors took advantage of the popular sense of this tradition, to convey their precepts under those fables which gave speech to the whole brute creation. The naturalists understood the tradition in the contrary sense, to signify, that, in the first ages, men used inarticulate sounds, like beasts, to express their wants and sensations; and that it was by slow degrees they came to the use of speech. This opinion was afterwards held by Lucretius, Diodorus Sic., and Gregory of Nyss.

Ver. 156. *All vocal beings, &c.*] This may be well explained by a sublime passage of the Psalmist, who, calling to mind the age of innocence, and full of the great ideas of those

Chains of love
Combining all below and all above,
Which to one point, and to one centre bring,
Beast, man, or angel, servant, lord, or king;

breaks out into this rapturous and divine apostrophe, to call back the devious creation to its pristine rectitude; that very state our author describes above: "Praise the Lord, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light," &c. Psalm cxlviii.

Ver. 158. *Unbribed, unbloody, &c.*] *i.e.* the state described from ver. 263 to 269 was not yet arrived. For then, when superstition was become so extreme as to bribe the gods with human sacrifices, tyranny became necessitated to woo the priest for a favourable answer.

Ver. 159. *Heav'n's attribute, &c.*] The poet supposeth the truth of the Scripture account, that man was created lord of this inferior world (Ep. i. ver. 230).

Subjected these to those, and all to thee.

[1] Descartes.

Digitized by Google

What hath misled some to imagine that our author hath here fallen into a contradiction, was, I suppose, such passages as these, "Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine," &c.; and again, "Has God, thou fool! worked solely for thy good," &c. But, in truth, this is so far from contradicting what he had said of man's prerogative, that it greatly confirms it, and the Scripture account concerning it. And because the licentious manner in which this subject has been treated, has made some readers jealous and mistrustful of the author's sober meaning, I shall endeavour to explain it. Scripture says, that man was made lord of this sublunary world. But intoxicated with pride, the common effect of sovereignty, he erected himself, like little partial monarchs, into a tyrant. And as tyranny consists in supposing all made for the use of one, he took those freedoms with all, which are the consequence of such a principle. He soon began to consider the whole animal creation as his slaves rather than his subjects, as created for no use of their own, but for his use only, and therefore treated them with the utmost cruelty; and not content, to add insult to his cruelty, he endeavoured to philosophize himself into an opinion that these animals were mere machines, insensible of pain or pleasure. Thus man affected to be the wit as well as tyrant of the whole. So that it became one who adhered to the Scripture account of man's dominion to reprove this abuse of it, and to show that

> Heav'n's attribute was universal care,
> And man's prerogative to rule, but spare.

Ver. 171. *Thus then to man, &c.*]
M. du Resnel has translated the lines thus:

> La nature indignée alors se fit entendre;
> Va, malheureux mortel, va, lui dit-elle, apprendre;

One would wonder what should make the translator represent nature in such a passion with man, and calling him names, at a time when Mr. Pope supposed her in her best good-humour. But what led him into this mistake was another as gross. His author having described the state of innocence which ends at these lines,

> Heav'n's attribute was universal care,
> And man's prerogative to rule, but spare,

turns from those times, to a view of these latter ages, and breaks out into this tender and humane complaint,

> Ah! how unlike the man of times to come,
> Of half that live the butcher and the tomb, &c.

Unluckily, M. du Resnel took this man of times to come for the corrupter of that first age, and so imagined the poet had introduced nature only to set things right: he then supposed, of course, she was to be very angry; and not finding the author had represented her in any great emotion, he was willing to improve upon his original.

Ver. 174. *Learn from the beasts, &c.*] See Pliny's *Nat. Hist.* l. viii. c. 27, where several instances are given of animals discovering the medicinal efficacy of herbs, by their own use of them; and pointing out to some operations in the art of healing, by their own practice.

Ver. 199. *observant men obeyed;*] The epithet is beautiful, as signifying both obedience to the voice of nature, and attention to the lessons of the animal creation. But M. l'Abbé, who has a strange fatality of contradicting

Digitized by Google

his original, whenever he attempts to paraphrase, as he calls it, the sense, turns the lines in this manner:

Par ces mots la nature excita l'industrie,
Et de l'homme féroce enchaina la furie.

"Chained up the fury of savage man"; and so contradicts the author's whole system of benevolence, and goes over to the atheist's, who supposes the state of nature to be a state of war. What seems to have misled him was these lines:

What war could ravish, commerce could bestow,
And he returned a friend who came a foe.

But M. du Resnel should have considered, that though the author holds a state of nature to be a state of peace, yet he never imagined it impossible that there should be quarrels in it. He had said,

So drives self-love through just and through unjust.

He pushes no system to an extravagance, but steers (as he says in his preface) through doctrines seemingly opposite, or, in other words, follows truth uniformly throughout.

Ver. 208. *When love was liberty,*] *i. e.* When men had no need to guard their native liberty from their governors by civil pactions, the love which each master of a family had for those under his care being their best security.

Ver. 211. *'Twas virtue only, &c.*] Our author hath good authority for this account of the origin of kingship. Aristotle assures us, that it was virtue only, or in arts or arms: Καθίσταται βασιλεὺς ἐκ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν καθ' ὑπεροχὴν ἀρετῆς, ἢ πράξεων τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἢ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν τοιούτου γένους.

Ver. 219. *He from the wond'ring furrow, &c.*] *i. e.* He subdued the intractibility of all the four elements, and made them subservient to the use of man.

Ver. 225. *Then, looking up, &c.*] The poet here maketh their more serious attention to religion to have arisen, not from their gratitude amidst abundance, but from their inability in distress, by showing that, in prosperity, they rested in second causes, the immediate authors of their blessings, whom they revered as God; but that, in adversity, they reasoned up to the First:

Then, looking up from sire to sire, &c.

This, I am afraid, is but too true a representation of humanity.

Ver. 225 to 240.] M. du Resnel, not apprehending that the poet was here returned to finish his description of the state of nature, has fallen into one of the grossest errors that ever was committed. He has mistaken this account of true religion for an account of the origin of idolatry, and thus he fatally embellishes his own blunder:

Jaloux d'en conserver les traits et la figure,
Leur zèle industrieux inventa la peinture.
Leurs neveux, attentifs à ces hommes fameux,
Qui par le droit du sang avoient régné sur eux,
Trouvent-ils dans leur suite un grand, un premier père,
Leur aveugle respect l'adore et le révère.

Here you have one of the finest pieces of reasoning turned at once into a heap of nonsense. The unlucky term of "Great first Father," was mistaken by our translator to signify a "great grandfather." But he should have

Digitized by Google

considered, that Mr. Pope always represents God under the idea of a Father. He should have observed, that the poet is here describing those men who

> To virtue, in the paths of pleasure trod,
> And owned a father, where they own'd a God!

Ver. 231. *Ere wit oblique, &c.*] A beautiful allusion to the effects of the prismatic glass on the rays of light.

Ver. 242. *Th' enormous faith, &c.*] In this Aristotle placeth the difference between a king and a tyrant, that the first supposeth himself made for the people; the other, that the people are made for him: Βούλεται δ' ὁ βασιλεὺς εἶναι φύλαξ, ὅπως οἱ μὲν κεκτημένοι τὰς οὐσίας μηδὲν ἄδικον πάσχωσιν, ὁ δὲ δῆμος μὴ ὑβρίζηται μηθέν· ἡ δὲ τυραννὶς πρὸς οὐδὲν ἀποβλέπει κοινὸν, εἰ μὴ τῆς ἰδίας ὠφελείας χάριν. Pol. lib. v. cap. 10.

Ver. 245. *Force first made conquest, &c.*] All this is agreeable to fact, and shows our author's knowledge of human nature. For that impotency of mind, as the Latin writers call it, which gives birth to the enormous crimes necessary to support a tyranny, naturally subjects its owner to all the vain, as well as real, terrors of conscience. Hence the whole machinery of superstition. It is true, the poet observes, that afterwards, when the tyrant's fright was over, he had cunning enough, from the experience of the effect of superstition upon himself, to turn it, by the assistance of the priest (who for his reward went shares with him in the tyranny) against the justly dreaded resentment of his subjects. For a tyrant naturally and reasonably supposeth all his slaves to be his enemies. Having given the causes of superstition, he next describeth its objects:

> Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust, &c.

The ancient pagan gods are here very exactly described. This fact evinceth the truth of that original, which the poet gives to superstition; for if these phantasms were first raised in the imagination of tyrants, they must needs have the qualities here assigned to them. For force being the tyrant's virtue, and luxury his happiness, the attributes of his god would of course be revenge and lust; in a word, the antitype of himself. But there was another, and more substantial cause, of the resemblance between a tyrant and a pagan god; and that was the making gods of conquerors, as the poet says, and so canonizing a tyrant's vices with his person. That these gods should *suit* a people humbled to the stroke of a master will be no wonder, if we recollect a generous saying of the ancients,—"that day which sees a man a slave takes away half his virtue."

Ver. 262. *and heav'n on pride.*] This might be very well said of those times when no one was content to go to heaven without being received there *on the* footing of a god, with a ceremony of an Ἀποθέωσις.

Ver. 283. *'Twas then, the studious head, &c.*] The poet seemeth here to mean the polite and flourishing age of Greece; and those benefactors to mankind, which he had principally in view, were Socrates and Aristotle; who, of all the pagan world, spoke best of God, and wrote best of *government*.

Ver. 295. *Such is the world's great harmony, &c.*] A harmony very different from the pre-established harmony of the celebrated Leibnitz, which introduceth a fatality destructive of all religion and morality. Yet hath the learned M. de Crousaz ventured to accuse our poet of espousing that dangerous whimsy. The pre-established harmony was built upon, and is an outrageous

Digitized by Google

extension of a conception of Plato, who, combating the atheistical objections about the origin of evil, employs this argument in defence of Providence: "That amongst an infinite number of possible worlds in God's idea, this which he hath created and brought into being, and which admits of a mixture of evil, is the best. But if the best, then evil consequently is partial, comparatively small, and tendeth to the greater perfection of the whole." This principle is espoused and supported by Mr. Pope with all the power of reason and poetry. But neither was Plato a fatalist, nor is there any fatalism in the argument. As to the truth of the notion, that is another question; and how far it cleareth up the very difficult controversy about the origin of evil, is still another. That it is a full solution of the difficulty, I cannot think, for reasons too long to be given in this place. Perhaps we shall never have a full solution here, and it may be no great matter though we have not, as we are demonstrably certain of the moral attributes of the Deity. Yet this will never hinder writers from exposing themselves on this subject. A late author[1] thinks he can account for the origin of evil, and therefore he will write: he thinks too, that the clearing up this difficulty is necessary to secure the foundation of religion, and therefore he will print. But he is doubly mistaken: he must know little of philosophy to fancy that he has found the solution; and still less of religion, to imagine that the want of his solution can affect our belief in God. Such writers

Amuse th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.

However, Mr. Pope may be justified in receiving and enforcing this Platonic notion, as it hath been adopted by the most celebrated and orthodox divines both of the ancient and modern church. This doctrine was taken up by Leibnitz; but it was to ingraft upon it a most pernicious fatalism. Plato said, God chose the best: Leibnitz said, he could not but choose the best, as he could not act without, what this philosopher called, a sufficient reason. Plato supposed freedom in God to choose one of two things equally good: Leibnitz held the supposition to be absurd: but, however, admitting the case, he still held that God could not choose one of two things equally good. Thus it appears, the first went on the system of freedom; and that the latter, notwithstanding the most artful disguises of his principles, in his Theodicée, was a thorough fatalist: for we cannot well suppose he would give that freedom to man which he had taken away from God. The truth of the matter seems to be this: he saw, on the one hand, the monstrous absurdity of supposing, with Spinoza, that blind fate was the author of a coherent universe; but yet, on the other, he could not conceive with Plato, how God could foresee and conduct, according to an archetypal idea, a world, of all possible worlds the best, inhabited by free agents. This difficulty, therefore, which made the socinians take prescience from God, disposed Leibnitz to take free-will from man: and thus he fashioned his fantastical hypothesis; he supposed that when God made the body, he impressed on his new-created machine a certain series or suite of motions; and that when he made the fellow soul, he impressed a correspondent series of ideas; whose operations, throughout the whole duration of the union, were so exactly timed, that whenever an idea was excited, a correspondent motion was ever ready to satisfy the volition. Thus, for instance, when the mind had the will to raise the arm to the head, the body

[1] Soame Jenyns, who published in 1757 a Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil.

Digitized by Google

was so pre-contrived, as to raise, at that very moment, the part required. This he called the pre-established harmony; and with this he promised to do wonders. "Yet after all," says an excellent philosopher and best interpreter of Newton, "he owned to his friends, that this extraordinary notion was only a lusus ingenii (un jeu d'esprit) to try his parts, and laugh at the credulity of philosophers; who are as fond of a new paradox, as enthusiasts of a new light. If at other times he was so pleased with his own notions in his Theodicée, as to defend them seriously against the learned Dr. Clarke, that shows only that he angled for two different sorts of reputation, from the same performance; and unluckily he lost both. The subject was too serious to pass for a romance; and the principles too absurd to be admitted for truth." *Mr. Baxter's Appendix to the Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*, p. 162. As this was the case, none would have thought it amiss in M. Voltaire to oppose one romance to another, had he rested there. But his tale of Candide, which professes to ridicule the optimism of Leibnitz, was apparently composed in favour of an irreligious naturalism, which he makes the solution of all the difficulties in the story.

Ver. 303. *For forms of government, &c.*] Such as Harrington, Wildman, Neville,[1] &c. about the several forms of a legitimate policy. These fine lines have been strangely misunderstood. The author, against his own express words, against the plain sense of his system, hath been conceived to mean, that all governments and all religions were, as to their forms and objects, indifferent. But as this wrong judgment proceeded from ignorance of the reason of the reproof, as explained above,[2] that explanation is alone sufficient to rectify the mistake. However, not to leave him under the least suspicion in a matter of so much importance, I shall justify the sense here given to this passage, more at large:

I. And first, as to society: Let us consider the words themselves; and then compare this mistaken sense with the context. The poet, we may observe, is here speaking, not of civil society at large, but of a just legitimate policy:

Th' according music of a well-mixed state.

Now mixed states are of various kinds; in some of which the democratic, in others the aristocratic, and in others the monarchic form prevails. Now, as each of these mixed forms is equally legitimate, as being founded on the principles of natural liberty, that man is guilty of the highest folly, who chooseth rather to employ himself in a speculative contest for the superior excellence of one of these forms to the rest, than in promoting the good administration of that settled form to which he is subject. And yet most of our warm disputes about government have been of this kind. Again, if by forms of government

[1] All three were republicans who flourished at the period of the Great Rebellion. Harrington published his political work, Oceana, in 1656, and Neville his Plato Redivivus, or A Dialogue concerning Government, in 1681. Burnet says of Wildman that he "had been a constant meddler on all occasions in everything that looked like sedition, and seemed inclined to oppose everything that was uppermost." He served in the Parliamentary army, and proved troublesome to Cromwell, who imprisoned him. His restless republicanism was thought dangerous at the Restoration, and the government kept him under lock and key for some years. He survived to take a share in the Revolution of 1688, and was as hard to please as in his younger days. Pepys says in 1667, that he had been "a false fellow to everybody."

[2] In the Commentary on ver. 303.

Digitized by Google

must needs be meant legitimate government, because that is the subject under debate, then by modes of faith, which is the correspondent idea, must needs be meant the modes or explanations of the true faith, because the author is here too on the subject of true religion:

Relumed her ancient light, not kindled new.

Besides, the very expression (than which nothing can be more precise) confineth us to understand by modes of faith, those human explanations of christian mysteries, in contending about which zeal and ignorance have so perpetually violated charity. Secondly, If we consider the context; to suppose him to mean, that all forms of government are indifferent, is making him directly contradict the preceding paragraph, where he extols the patriot for discriminating the true from the false modes of government. He, says the poet,

Taught pow'r's due use to people and to kings,
Taught not to slack, nor strain its tender strings;
The less, or greater, set so justly true,
That touching one must strike the other too;
Till jarring interests of themselves create
Th' according music of a well-mixed state.

Here he recommendeth the true form of government, which is the mixed. In another place he as strongly condemneth the false, or the absolute *jure divino* form:

For nature knew no right divine in men.

But the reader will not be displeased to see the poet's own apology, as I find it written in the year 1740, in his own hand, in the margin of a pamphlet, where he found these two celebrated lines very much misapplied: "The author of these lines was far from meaning that no one form of government is, in itself, better than another, (as, that mixed or limited monarchy, for example, is not preferable to absolute), but that no form of government, however excellent or preferable, in itself, can be sufficient to make a people happy, unless it be administered with integrity. On the contrary, the best sort of government, when the form of it is preserved, and the administration corrupt, is most dangerous."

II. Again, to suppose the poet to mean, that all religions are indifferent, is an equally wrong, as well as uncharitable suspicion. Mr. Pope, though his subject, in this Essay on Man, confineth him to natural religion, his purpose being to vindicate God's natural dispensations to mankind against the atheist, yet he giveth frequent intimations of a more sublime dispensation, and even of the necessity of it, particularly in his second Epistle, ver. 149, &c., where he confesseth the weakness and insufficiency of human reason. And likewise in his fourth Epistle, where, speaking of the good man, the favourite of heaven, he saith,

For him alone, hope leads from goal to goal,
And opens still, and opens on his soul:
Till, lengthened on to faith, and unconfined,
It pours the bliss that fills up all the mind.

But natural religion never lengthened hope on to faith; nor did any religion, but the christian, ever conceive that faith could fill the mind with happiness. Lastly, In this very Epistle, and in this very place, speaking of the great

Digitized by Google

restorers of the religion of nature, he intimates that they could only draw God's shadow, not his image:

> Relumed her ancient light, not kindled new,
> If not God's image, yet his shadow drew:

as reverencing that truth, which telleth us, this discovery was reserved for the "glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Ver. 305. *For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;*] These latter ages have seen so many scandalous contentions for modes of faith, to the violation of Christian charity, and dishonour of sacred Scripture, that it is not at all strange they should become the object of so benevolent and wise an author's resentment. But that which he here seemed to have more particularly in his eye, was the long and mischievous squabble between Waterland and Jackson,[1] on a point confessedly above reason, and amongst those adorable mysteries, which it is the honour of our religion to find unfathomable. In this, by the weight of answers and replies, redoubled upon one another without mercy, they made so profound a progress, that the one proved, nothing hindered in nature, but that the Son might have been the Father; and the other, that nothing hindered in grace, but that the Son may be a mere creature. But if, instead of throwing so many Greek Fathers at one another's heads, they had but chanced to reflect on the sense of one Greek word, *απειρια*, that it signifies both infinity and ignorance, this single equivocation might have saved them ten thousand, which they expended in carrying on the controversy. However, those mists that magnified the scene enlarged the character of the combatants, and nobody expecting common sense on a subject where we have no ideas, the defects of dulness disappeared, and its advantages (for, advantages it has) were all provided for. The worst is, such kind of writers seldom know when to have done. For writing themselves up into the same delusion with their readers, they are apt to venture out into the more open paths of literature, where their reputation, made out of that stuff which Lucian calls *σκότος ὁλόχροος*, presently falls from them, and their nakedness appears. And thus it fared with our two worthies. The world, which must have always something to amuse it, was now, and it was time, grown weary of its playthings; and catched at a new object, that promised them more agreeable entertainment. Tindal, a kind of bastard Socrates, had brought our speculations from heaven to earth, and, under the pretence of advancing the antiquity of christianity, laboured to undermine its original. This was a controversy that required another management. Clear sense, severe reasoning, a thorough knowledge of prophane and sacred antiquity, and an intimate acquaintance with human nature, were the qualities proper for such as engaged in this subject. A very unpromising adventure for these metaphysical nurslings, bred up under the shade of chimeras. Yet they would needs venture out.[2] What they got by it was only to be once well laughed at, and then forgotten.

[1] A false pretence. Waterland expressed his disapproval of Warburton's Divine Legation, and Jackson wrote a formal refutation. Warburton, as sensitive as he was abusive, never forgave them, and to revenge his wounded vanity, he thrust this forced digression into the middle of Pope's works under the hollow plea that Pope seemed to have had in his mind the controversy between Jackson and Waterland on the Trinity. Jackson was an Arian clergyman, who defended the views of Samuel Clarke.

[2] Tindal, who was a deist, published in 1730 his well-known work, Christianity as old as the Creation. Waterland wrote an answer called Scripture Vindicated, and Jackson, his Remarks on a book entitled, etc.

Digitized by Google

But one odd circumstance deserves to be remembered; though they wrote not, we may be sure, in concert, yet each attacked his adversary at the same time; fastened upon him in the same place; and mumbled him with just the same toothless rage. But the ill success of this escape soon brought them to themselves. The one made a fruitless effort to revive the old game, in a discourse on The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity; and the other has been ever since rambling in Space and Time.[1] This short history, as insignificant as the subjects of it are, may not be altogether unuseful to posterity. Divines may learn by these examples to avoid the mischiefs done to religion and literature, through the affectation of being wise above what is written, and knowing beyond what can be understood.

Ver. 318. *And bade self-love and social be the same.*] True self-love is an appetite for that proper good, for the enjoyment of which we were made as we are. Now that good is commensurate with all other good, and a part and portion of universal good: it is, therefore, the same with social, which hath these properties.

NOTES ON EPISTLE IV.

Ver. 6. *O'erlooked, seen double, &c.*] O'erlooked by those who place happiness in any thing exclusive of virtue; seen double by those who admit any thing else to have a share with virtue in procuring happiness, these being the two general mistakes which this Epistle is employed to confute.

Ver. 21, 23. *Some place the bliss in action,——*
Some sunk to beasts, &c.]

1. Those who place happiness, or the *summum bonum*, in pleasure, Ἡδονή; such as the Cyrenaic sect, called, on that account, the Hedonic. 2. Those who place it in a certain tranquillity or calmness of mind, which they call Εὐθυμία; such as the Democritic sect. 3. The Epicurean. 4. The Stoic. 5. The Protagorean, which held that Man was πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον, the measure of all things; for that all things which appear to him, are, and those things which appear not to any man, are not; so that every imagination or opinion of every man was true. 6. The Sceptic; whose absolute doubt is, with great judgment, said to be the effect of indolence, as well as the absolute trust of the Protagorean. For the same dread of labour attending the search of truth, which makes the Protagorean presume it is always at hand, makes the Sceptic conclude it is never to be found. The only difference is, that the laziness of the one is desponding, and the laziness of the other sanguine; yet both can give it a good name, and call it happiness.

Ver. 23. *Some sunk to beasts, &c.*] These four lines added in the last edition, as necessary to complete the summary of the false pursuits after happiness among the Greek philosophers.

[1] Waterland published a sermon called, A familiar discourse upon the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the use and importance of it; and Jackson, after publishing in 1734 his treatise On the Existence and Unity of God, followed it up in 1735, with A Defence of the book entitled, On the Existence, etc., in answer to Law's Enquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, etc. Warburton, in his discreditable note, has not the candour to allude to the real ground of his rancour against Jackson and Waterland.

Digitized by Google

Ver. 35. *Remember, man, "the Universal Cause*
"Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws:"]

I reckon it for nothing that M. du Resnel saw none of the fine reasoning from these two lines to ver. 73, in which the poet confutes both the philosophic and popular errors concerning happiness. What I can least bear is his perverting these two lines to a horrid and senseless fatalism, foreign to the argument in hand, and directly contrary to the poet's general principles:

Une loi générale
Détermine toujours la cause principale;

i. e. a general law always determines the first cause: which is the very Fate of the ancient pagans; who supposed that the destinies gave law to the father of gods and men. The poet says again, soon after, ver. 49, "Order is heaven's first law," *i. e.* the first law made by God relates to order, which is a beautiful allusion to the Scripture history of the creation, when God first appeased the disorders of chaos, and separated the light from the darkness. Let us now hear his translator:

L'ordre, cet inflexible et grand législateur,
Qui des décrets du ciel est le premier auteur.

Order, that inflexible and grand legislator, who is the first author of the law of heaven. A proposition abominable in most senses; absurd in all.

Ver. 79. *Reason's whole pleasure, &c.*] This is a beautiful periphrasis for happiness; for all we feel of good is by sensation and reflection. But the translator, who seemed little to concern himself with the poet's philosophy or argument, mistook this description of happiness for a description of the intellectual and sensitive faculties, opposed to one another, and therefore turns it thus,

Le charme séducteur, dont s'enivrant les sens,
Les plaisirs de l'esprit, encore plus ravissans;

And so, with the highest absurdity, not only makes the poet constitute *sensual excesses* a part of human happiness, but likewise the product of virtue.

Ver. 82. *And peace, &c.*] Conscious innocence, says the poet, is the only source of internal peace; and known innocence, of external; therefore, peace is the sole issue of virtue, or, in his own emphatic words, peace is all thy own; a conclusive observation in his argument; which stands thus: Is happiness rightly placed in externals? No; for it consists in health, peace, and competence; health and competence are the product of temperance; and peace, of perfect innocence.

Ver. 100. *See god-like Turenne*] This epithet has a peculiar justness, the great man to whom it is applied not being distinguished from other generals, for any of his superior qualities, so much as for his providential care of those whom he led to war, in which he was so intent, that his chief purpose in taking on himself the command of armies, seems to have been the preservation of mankind. In this god-like care he was more remarkably employed throughout the whole course of that famous campaign in which he lost his life.

Ver. 110. *Lent heav'n a parent, &c.*] This last instance of the poet's illustration of the ways of Providence, the reader sees has a peculiar elegance, where a tribute of piety to a parent is paid in return of thanks to, and made subservient of his vindication of, the great Giver and Father of all things. The

Digitized by Google

mother of the author, a person of great piety and charity, died the year this poem was finished, viz. 1733.

Ver. 121. *Think we, like some weak prince, &c.*] Agreeable hereunto, Holy Scripture, in its account of things under the common Providence of heaven, never represents miracles as wrought for the sake of him who is the object of them, but in order to give credit to some of God's extraordinary dispensations to mankind.

Ver. 123. *Shall burning Etna, &c.*] Alluding to the fate of those two great naturalists, Empedocles and Pliny, who both perished by too near an approach to Etna and Vesuvius, while they were exploring the cause of their eruptions.

Ver. 142. After ver. 142 in some editions :

> Give each a system, all must be at strife;
> What different systems for a man and wife!

The joke, though lively, was ill placed, and therefore struck out of the text.

Ver. 177. *Go, like the Indian, &c.*] Alluding to the example of the Indian, in Epist. i. ver. 99, which shows, that that example was not given to discredit any rational hopes of future happiness, but only to reprove the folly of separating them from charity, as when

> Zeal, not charity, became the guide,
> And hell was built on spite, and heav'n on pride.

Ver. 219. *Heroes are much the same, &c.*] This character might have been drawn with greater force ; and deserved the poet's care. But Milton supplies what is here wanting.

> They err who count it glorious to subdue
> By conquest far and wide, to over-run
> Large countries, and in field great battles win,
> Great cities by assault. What do these worthies,
> But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
> Peaceable nations, neighb'ring or remote,
> Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
> Than those their conqu'rors; who leave behind
> Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
> And all the flourishing works of peace destroy?
> Then swell with pride, and must be titled gods;
> Till conqu'ror death discovers them scarce men,
> Rolling in brutish vices and deformed,
> Violent or shameful death their due reward.—Par. Reg. b. iii.

Ver. 222. *an enemy of all mankind!*] Had all nations, with regard to their heroes, been of the humour with the Normans, who called Robert II., the greatest of their Dukes, by the name of Robert the Devil, the races of heroes might have been less numerous, or, however, less mischievous.

Ver. 267. *Painful pre-eminence, &c.*] This, to his friend, nor does it at all contradict what he had said to him concerning happiness, in the beginning of the Epistle :

> 'Tis never to be bought, but always free,
> And fled from monarchs, St. John! dwells with thee.

For there he compliments his virtue ; here he estimates the value of his politics, which he calls wisdom. He is now proving that nothing either external to man, or what is not in man's power, and of his own acquire-

Digitized by Google

ment, can make him happy here. The most plausible rival of virtue is human wisdom: yet even this is so far from giving any degree of real happiness, that it deprives us of those common comforts of life, which are a kind of support, under the want of happiness. Such as the more innocent of those delusions which he speaks of in the second Epistle,

Those painted clouds tha beautify our days, &c.

Now knowledge destroyeth all those comforts, by setting man above life's weaknesses; so that in him, who thinketh to attain happiness by knowledge alone, independent of virtue, the fable is reversed, and in a preposterous attempt to gain the substance, he loseth even the shadow. This I take to be the sense of this fine stroke of satire on the wrong pursuits after happiness.

Ver. 281, 283. *If parts allure thee,—*
Or ravished with the whistling of a name,]

These two instances are chosen with great judgment. The world, perhaps, doth not afford two such other. Bacon discovered and laid down those true principles of science, by whose assistance Newton was enabled to unfold the whole law of nature. He was no less eminent for the creative power of his imagination, the brightness of his conceptions, and the force of his expression; yet being convicted on his own confession for bribery and corruption in the administration of justice, while he presided in the supreme court of equity, he endeavoured to repair his ruined fortunes by the most profligate flattery to the court, which, indeed, from his very first entrance into it, he had accustomed himself to practise with a prostitution that disgraceth the very profession of letters or of science.

Cromwell seemeth to be distinguished in the most eminent manner, with regard to his abilities, from all other great and wicked men, who have overturned the liberties of their country. The times in which others have succeeded in this attempt, were such as saw the spirit of liberty suppressed and stifled by a general luxury and venality; but Cromwell subdued his country, when this spirit was at its height, by a successful struggle against court-oppression; and while it was conducted and supported by a set of the greatest geniuses for government the world ever saw embarked together in one common cause.

Ver. 283. *Or ravished with the whistling of a name,*] And even this fantastic glory sometimes suffers a terrible reverse. Sacheverel, in his Voyage to Icolm-kill, describing the church there, tells us, that "in one corner is a peculiar enclosure, in which were the monuments of the kings of many different nations, as Scotland, Ireland, Norway, and the Isle of Man. This (said the person who showed me the place, pointing to a plain stone) was the monument of the great Teague, king of Ireland. I had never heard of him, and could not but reflect of how little value is greatness, that has barely left a name scandalous to a nation, and a grave which the meanest of mankind would never envy."

Ver. 309. *Know then this truth, enough for man to know,*
"Virtue alone is happiness below."]

M. du Resnel translates the line thus·

Apprend donc, qu'il n'est point ici bas de bonheur,
Si la vertu ne règle et l'esprit et le cœur.

i.e. Learn then, that there is no happiness here below, unless virtue regulates the heart and the understanding, which destroys all the force of his author's

Digitized by Google

conclusion. He had proved, that happiness consists neither in external goods, as the vulgar imagined, nor yet in the visions of the philosophers: he concludes, therefore, that it consists in virtue alone. His translator says, that without virtue, there can be no happiness. And so say the men whom his author is here confuting. For though they supposed external goods requisite to happiness, it was when in conjunction with virtue. Mr. Pope says,

Virtue alone is happiness below:

And so ought a faithful translator to have said after him.

Ver. 316. After ver. 316, in the MS.

Ev'n while it seems unequal to dispose,
And chequers all the good man's joys with woes,
'Tis but to teach him to support each state,
With patience this, with moderation that;
And raise his base on that one solid joy,
Which conscience gives, and nothing can destroy.

These lines are extremely finished. In which there is such a soothing sweetness in the melancholy harmony of the versification, as if the poet was then in that tender office in which he was most officious, and in which all his soul came out, the condoling with some good man in affliction.

Ver. 341. *For him alone, hope leads from goal to goal, &c.*] Plato, in his first book of a Republic, hath a remarkable passage to this purpose: "He whose conscience does not reproach him, has cheerful hope for his companion, and the support and comfort of his old age, according to Pindar. For this great poet, O Socrates, very elegantly says, That he who leads a just and holy life, has always amiable hope for his companion, which fills his heart with joy, and is the support and comfort of his old age. Hope, the most powerful of the divinities, in governing the ever-changing and inconstant temper of mortal men." In the same manner Euripides speaks in his Hercules Furens: "He is the good man in whose breast hope springs eternally. But to be without hope in the world, is the portion of the wicked."

Ver. 378. *Come then, my friend! &c.*] This noble apostrophe, by which the poet concludes the Essay in an address to his friend, will furnish a critic with examples of every one of those five species of elocution, from which, as from its sources, Longinus deduceth the sublime.

1. The first and chief is a grandeur and sublimity of conception:

Come then, my friend! my genius! come along;
O master of the poet, and the song!
And while the muse now stoops, and now ascends,
To man's low passions, or their glorious ends.

2. The second, that pathetic enthusiasm, which, at the same time, melts and inflames:

Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,
To fall with dignity, with temper rise;
Formed by thy converse, happily to steer
From grave to gay, from lively to severe;
Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,
Intent to reason, or polite to please.

3. A certain elegant formation and ordonance of figures:

Oh! while along the stream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,

Digitized by Google

Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?

4. A splendid diction:

When statesmen, heroes, kings, in dust repose
Whose sons shall blush their fathers were thy foes,
Shall then this verse to future age pretend
Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?
That urged by thee, I turned the tuneful art,
From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;
For wit's false mirror held up nature's light.

5. And fifthly, which includes in itself all the rest, a weight and dignity in the composition:

Shew'd erring pride, whatever is, is right;
That reason, passion, answer one great aim;
That true self-love and social are the same;
That virtue only makes our bliss below;
And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know.[1]

[1] Nothing was ever more unfortunate than these five examples of sublimity, all of which, as Dr. Warton observes, prove the contrary.—BOWLES.

Digitized by Google

NOTES OF W. WARBURTON ON THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

Universal Prayer.] It may be proper to observe, that some passages in the preceding Essay, having been unjustly suspected of a tendency towards fate and naturalism, the author composed this prayer as the sum of all, to show that his system was founded in free-will, and terminated in piety; that the First Cause was as well the Lord and Governor of the Universe as the Creator of it; and that, by submission to his will (the great principle enforced throughout the Essay), was not meant suffering ourselves to be carried along by a blind determination, but resting in a religious acquiescence, and confidence full of hope and immortality. To give all this the greater weight, the poet chose for his model the Lord's Prayer, which, of all others, best deserves the title prefixed to his paraphrase.

Ver. 29. *If I am right, thy grace impart,—*
If I am wrong, O teach my heart]

As the imparting of grace, on the Christian system, is a stronger exertion of the divine power than the natural illumination of the heart, one would expect that right and wrong should change places, more aid being required to restore men to right, than to keep them in it. But as it was the poet's purpose to insinuate that revelation was the right, nothing could better express his purpose, than making the right secured by the guards of grace.

END OF VOL. II.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

STANDARD LIBRARY EDITIONS.

AUSTIN'S LECTURES ON JURISPRUDENCE; or, The Philosophy of Positive Law. Edited by ROBERT CAMPBELL. 2 vols. 8vo. 32s.

BOSWELL'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, including the Tour to the Hebrides. Edited by the Right Hon. JOHN WILSON CROKER. Portraits. 8vo. 10s.

BYRON'S (LORD) COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS. Edited, with Notes. Portrait. 6 vols. 8vo. 45s.

CROWE AND CAVALCASELLE'S HISTORY OF PAINTING IN ITALY. Illustrations. 3 vols. 8vo. 63s.

DERBY'S (LORD) TRANSLATION OF HOMER'S ILIAD, into English Blank Verse. 2 vols. 8vo. 24s.

DYER'S HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE; from the taking of Constantinople to the Close of the Crimean War, 1453—1857. 4 vols. 8vo. 42s.

ELPHINSTONE'S HISTORY OF INDIA; the Hindoo and Mahomedan Period. Edited by Professor COWELL. Map. 8vo. 18s.

FORSTER'S LIFE OF SIR JOHN ELIOT, 1590—1632. Portraits. 2 vols. 8vo. 30s.

——— ARREST OF THE FIVE MEMBERS BY CHARLES THE FIRST. A Chapter of English History re-written. 8vo. 12s.

——— DEBATES ON THE GRAND REMONSTRANCE, Nov. and Dec., 1641. With an Introductory Essay on English Freedom under Plantagenet and Tudor Sovereigns. 8vo. 12s.

——— CROMWELL, DE FOE, STEELE, CHURCHILL, AND FOOTE. Biographies. 8vo. 12s.

FORSYTH'S LIFE AND TIMES OF CICERO. With Selections from his Correspondence and Orations. Illustrations. 8vo. 10s. 6d.

GIBBON'S HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. With Notes by Dean MILMAN and M. GUIZOT. Edited, with additional Notes incorporating the researches of recent writers, by W. SMITH, LL.D. With Portrait and Maps. 8 vols. 8vo. 60s.

GOLDSMITH'S WORKS. Printed from the last edition revised by the Author. Edited, with Notes by PETER CUNNINGHAM, F.S.A. Vignettes. 4 vols. 8vo. 30s.

GROTE'S HISTORY OF GREECE; from the Earliest Period to the Close of the Generation contemporary with Alexander the Great. Portrait, Maps, and Plans. 8 vols. 8vo. 112s.

— ——— PLATO, AND THE OTHER COMPANIONS OF SOKRATES. 3 vols. 8vo. 45s.

HALLAM'S HISTORY OF EUROPE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES. 3 vols. 8vo. 30s.

——— CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND; from the Accession of Henry VII. to the Death of George II. 3 vols. 8vo. 30s.

——— LITERARY HISTORY OF EUROPE. 3 vols. 8vo. 36s.

HERODOTUS; a New English Version. Edited with copious Notes, embodying the Chief Results, Historical and Ethnographical, which have been obtained in the progress of Cuneiform and Hieroglyphical Discovery. By GEORGE RAWLINSON, M.A. Maps and Woodcuts. 4 vols. 8vo. 48s.

[*Continued.*

Digitized by Google

STANDARD LIBRARY EDITIONS—*continued.*

JOHNSON'S (DR.) LIVES OF THE MOST EMINENT ENGLISH POETS. Edited, with Notes by PETER CUNNINGHAM, F.S.A. 3 vols. 8vo. 22s. 6d.

MAHON'S (LORD) HISTORY OF ENGLAND; from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of Versailles, 1713—1783. 7 vols. 8vo. 93s.

——— REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE UNTIL THE PEACE OF UTRECHT. By EARL STANHOPE. 8vo. 16s.

——— LIFE OF WILLIAM PITT. 4 vols. 8vo. 24s.

MAINE ON ANCIENT LAW: its Connection with the Early History of Society, and its Relation to Modern Ideas. 8vo. 12s.

MARCO POLO'S TRAVELS. A New English Version. Illustrated by the light of Oriental Writers and Modern Travels. By COLONEL HENRY YULE, C.B. Maps and Illustrations. 2 vols. Medium 8vo.

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS; from the death of William the Silent to the Twelve Years' Truce. Portraits. 4 vols. 8vo. 60s.

RANKE'S HISTORY OF THE POPES OF ROME DURING THE 16th and 17th Centuries. Translated by SARAH AUSTIN. 3 vols. 8vo. 30s.

RAWLINSON'S ANCIENT MONARCHIES OF THE EAST, containing Chaldæa, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia; their History, Geography, and Antiquities. Maps and 500 Illustrations. 3 vols. 8vo. 42s.

ROBERTSON'S HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH; from the Apostolic Age to the Death of Boniface VIII., A.D., 64—1303. 4 vols. 8vo.

ROBINSON'S BIBLICAL RESEARCHES IN PALESTINE AND IN THE ADJACENT REGIONS. A Journal of Travels and Researches. With Historical Illustrations. Maps. 3 vols. 8vo.

SMILES' LIVES OF BRITISH ENGINEERS; from the Earliest Period down to the Present Time. With an Account of their Principal Works; comprising also a History of the Invention and Introduction of the Steam Engine and Railway Locomotive. Portaits and Illustrations. 4 vols. 8vo. 84s.

SMITH'S (DR. WM.) DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE; its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History. By Various Writers. Illustrations. 3 vols. 8vo. 105s.

——— DICTIONARY OF GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITIES. By Various Writers. Illustrations. 8vo. 21s.

——— DICTIONARY OF GREEK AND ROMAN BIOGRAPHY AND MYTHOLOGY. By Various Writers. Illustrations. 3 vols. 8vo. 63s.

——— DICTIONARY OF GREEK AND ROMAN GEOGRAPHY. By Various Writers. Illustrations. 2 vols. 8vo. 42s.

STANLEY'S (DEAN) HISTORY OF THE JEWISH CHURCH; from Abraham to the Captivity. Plans. 2 vols. 8vo. 24s.

——— HISTORY OF THE EASTERN CHURCH. Plans. 8vo. 12s.

——— SINAI AND PALESTINE; in Connection with their History. Plans. 8vo. 14s.

SYBEL'S (VON) HISTORY OF EUROPE DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, from the Secret Archives of Germany. 4 vols. 8vo. 48s.

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

RETURN TO ⟶ **CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**
202 Main Library

LOAN PERIOD 1 **HOME USE**	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405
6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

AUG 26 1982 4 6
9/26
10/26
11/26
12/26
1/26

SEP 04 1987
10/3/87
AUTO DISC SEP 25 1987
DEC 08 1993
AUTO DISC CIRC
AUTO DISC CIRC JUL 25 '94
7 DAY USE
AUG 06 1994
HOLD ON BOOK
AUTO DISC CIRC AUG 10 '94

7 DAY USE
AUG 22 1994
HOLD ON BOOK
AUTO DISC CIRC AUG 26 '94
NOV 30 1994

REC CIR JAN 21 '83
DEC 29 1986
AUTO. DISC. DEC 17 '86

RECEIVED
AUG 09 1995
CIRCULATION DEPT.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
FORM NO. DD6, 60m, 12/80 BERKELEY, CA 94720

Digitized by Google